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VÉZELAY

STUDIES IN CHURCH HISTORY

AN ABBOT OF VÉZELAY

BY

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PREFACE

When I visited Vézelay some years ago, I possessed an admirable guide-book for the architecture of the great church.[1] But I had a great desire to learn the history of the monastery, and I have written this brief monograph on the greatest of the Abbots, Pons de Montboissier, in the hope that it will give some pleasure to other travellers who go to Vézelay, and indeed to all who are interested in monastic history.

Monsieur Guizot translated the history of Vézelay, which was written by this Abbot's command, and included it in his "Collection de Memoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France depuis la fondation de la Monarchie Française jusqu'an 13me Siècle," vol. vii. (1825). He judged it to be the most vivid and detailed account of a medieval commune, with the single exception of the history of Laon, which was told by Guibert of Nogent. Monsieur Augustin Thierry was attracted to the subject by Monsieur Guizot's translation, and he devoted three of his charming "Lettres sur l'Histoire de France" (xxii.–xxiv.)[2] to the story of the Commune of Vézelay. He had begun to study history to find weapons for his political beliefs; and while the monk,

[1] Charles Porée, L'Abbaye de Vézelay ("Petites Monographies des Grands Édifices de la France," ed. M. E. Lefèvre-Pontalis).

[2] First published in 1825; revised edition 1866. Cf. "Letters," xiii.–xxiv., ed. G. Masson and G. W. Prothero, Pitt Press, 1885.

who wrote the "Historia Vizeliacensi" was a violent partisan of the Abbot, Monsieur Thierry wrote with a strong bias on the side of the burgesses. Moreover, he could not tell the whole story, for there were serious gaps for the critical years (1152–1155) in the only Latin text to which he had access. After the middle of the nineteenth century, Monsieur Chérest, a scholar and antiquary, to whom deep gratitude is due, printed as much as it was possible to recover of the torn pages of the original MS. at Auxerre, and wrote the history of Vézelay, from the earliest times to 1789, in the "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences Historiques et Naturelles de l'Yonne," in vols. xvi. and xxii. (1862 and 1868).

I have much pleasure in expressing my gratitude to my friend, Dr. William Hunt, who read the whole of my manuscript, and made most helpful suggestions. My best thanks are due to Mr. John Bilson, F.S.A., for his kind letter about the difficult question of the dates of the building of Vézelay; to Monsieur Lefèvre-Pontalis, Directeur de la Société Française d'Archéologie, for his generous permission to reproduce the plan of the church which has been published in the "Congrès Archéologique tenue à Avallon en 1907," as well as in Monsieur Porée's "Architectural Monograph;" and to Monsieur Martin Sabon for his photograph of the detail of the tympanum of the West door of the nave. The other photographs are by Messieurs Neurdein et Cie, 52, Avenue de Breteuil, Paris.

ROSE GRAHAM.

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AN ABBOT OF VÉZELAY

CHAPTER I

VÉZELAY

VÉZELAY is less known to Englishmen in the twentieth century than it was in the twelfth, when it was close to the great main road through France to Italy. France was a bridge between the Northern seas and the Mediterranean ; the traveller who followed the valley of the Seine had to cross the high land of Le Morvan to reach the valleys of the Saône and the Rhone, and the road from Paris led him through Auxerre to Avallon, and so by Autun to Chagny, Macon and Lyons on to the South.[1] Within a few miles of Avallon is the isolated hill crowned by the great church of the monastery of Vézelay.

Le Morvan is a high land of broad ridges,

[1] Pignot, "Histoire de l'Ordre de Cluny," I., p. 29.

narrow valleys and swift rivers and streams.[1] It divides the basins of the Seine and the Loire and rises slowly to a height of nearly three thousand feet towards the south where it loses its regular form, and from Autun the traveller sees a chain of mountains. In contrast with the fertile hills and valleys of Burgundy, and the rich pastures of the low-lands of the Nivernais, the soil of Le Morvan is poor, but it is still densely covered with woods of oak, beech and chestnut. Many of the barges which arrive laden with wood at the quays of the Seine at Paris have begun their voyage in Le Morvan at the town of Clamecy on the Yonne.[2]

When Julius Cæsar conquered Gaul, Le Morvan was inhabited by the Aedui, a purely Gallic people whose territory stretched from the Saône to the Loire.[3] Bibracte, their strongly fortified capital, was in the south of Le Morvan, on the flat-topped hill now called

[1] Lavisse, "Histoire de France," I., i., pp. 112–115.

[2] Ardouin-Dumazet, "Voyage en France," I., pp. 4, 8, 11, (ed. 1898).

[3] Lavisse, op. cit., I., ii., pp. 30, 93–100.

Le Mont Beuvray,[1] about twelve miles west of Autun. The Aedui were faithful allies of Julius Cæsar in the early years of the Gallic wars, but when Vercingetorix led a general rising against the Romans, and it seemed that he would be successful, the Aedui decided to join him. In B.C. 52 he summoned the representatives of the Gallic cities to a great gathering at Bibracte. A few months later Vercingetorix was defeated and then forced to surrender at Alesia on Mont Auxois in the Côte d'Or, and the Aedui hastened to submit to Cæsar. It is probable that they deserted Bibracte about A.D. 5 or 6 for the new Roman city on the Arroux, Augustodunum, which was surrounded by walls flanked by sixty-two towers and entered by four great gates of which two are still standing in the suburbs of Autun. For two hundred and fifty years Augustodunum was one of the chief Roman cities in Gaul, famous for its schools as well as for its fine buildings, the

[1] Bulliot, "Fouilles du Mont Beuvray," 1899; P. G. Hamerton, "The Mount and the City of Autun."

amphitheatre, theatre and temples.[1] It was in great part destroyed in 269 when it was besieged and captured by the usurper Tetricus. Nevertheless in the fourth century Autun was chosen as the cathedral city of a diocese in the ecclesiastical province of Lyons[2]; and Vézelay was within the Northern boundary.

In the twelfth century Vézelay was the scene of great events. The frontier stronghold of Edessa in Syria was captured by the Saracens in 1144, and when the news was spread in Western Europe, preparations began for a second crusade. In 1145 King Louis VII. kept Christmas with his court at Bourges.[3] Godfrey, Bishop of Langres, had just come back from the Holy Land, and he told the King and his nobles about the fall of Edessa and the sufferings of the Christians. The King summoned a general assembly to meet him at Vézelay at Easter. Pope Eugenius III.

[1] Lavisse, op. cit., I., ii., pp. 366–368.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

[3] Odo of Deuil, De Ludovici VII. Francorum regis . . profectione in orientem, Lib. I., cap. I., Migne, Patrologia Latina CLXXXV., p. 1205.

commanded St. Bernard, the famous Abbot of Clairvaux, to preach the crusade, and so he came to Vézelay to give the crusader's cross to the King. "Almost all France was there," wrote the chronicler of the monastery. There was no space large enough inside the town to hold the throng, so a wooden platform was put up on the slope of the hill below. On March 31, 1146, the young King, who was then twenty-five years old, mounted the platform wearing his cross and stood by the side of St. Bernard, who preached to a vast multitude urging them to go and fight in the Holy Land. So many of those who heard him were stirred by his marvellous eloquence that they shouted at once for crosses. He had not enough to give them, and while he stayed at Vézelay, he even cut up some of his own clothes and sewed them into crosses. The Abbot of Vézelay, Pons de Montboissier, built a little chapel on the hillside where St. Bernard preached.[2]

[1] Luc d'Achery, "Spicilegium," III., p. 530 (ed. 1687).

[2] De glorioso rege Ludovico Ludovici filio ed. Molinier, p. 160.

Among those who took the cross were the King's brothers, the Bishops of Langres, Noyon and Lisieux, the Count of Toulouse and Marquis of Provence, the Count of Flanders, the son of the Count of Champagne, the two sons of the Count of Nevers. Many other counts, barons and knights, and great numbers of the people followed their example. Eleanor, the great heiress of Aquitaine, who was for fifteen years Queen of France and afterwards Queen of England for thirty-five years, was a girl of twenty-four, when she took the cross at Vézelay, and she went on the crusade with her husband, Louis VII. The general enthusiasm was tempered by wisdom, and a year was spent in preparation.

In 1166 Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, went to keep Whitsuntide at Vézelay.[1] He had been an exile from England for over eighteen months and had spent most of the time in the Cistercian monastery of Pontigny, twelve miles north-east of Auxerre. On April 24 he had received from Alexander

[1] Thomas Becket, Rolls Series, Vol. V. pp. 382–385.

III. a commission as papal legate in England which armed him with undisputed authority over Henry II. and his subjects. The Archbishop of Rouen and the Bishops of Lisieux and Séez were sent by Henry II. to mediate with the Archbishop of Canterbury, but when they arrived at Pontigny he had gone on a pilgrimage to Soissons, over 100 miles to the north as the crow flies. He spent the three nights of May 31, June 1 and 2 in prayer before the shrines of the Virgin, St. Gregory the Great, the founder of the English church and of the see of Canterbury, and of St. Drausius, a saint whose aid was sought by soldiers to make them invincible in battle. Then the Archbishop started on his way to Vézelay. On June 10 he was at the Cistercian monastery of Rigny on the Cure near Vermenton, when he heard that Henry II. was seriously ill. On Whit Sunday, June 12, he went into the pulpit in the nave of the monks' church at Vézelay, and in the hearing of crowds of men of different nations who were present at high mass, he condemned

the Constitutions of Clarendon, and pronounced a solemn sentence of excommunication on all who observed or enforced their observance, all who had counselled and all who had defended them, and he absolved the bishops from their promise to keep them. He excommunicated Henry II.'s counsellors and his special enemies by name, among them John of Oxford, Dean of Salisbury, Richard of Ilchester, Archdeacon of Poitou, and Richard de Lucy, the justiciar. He spared the King on account of his dangerous illness, but summoned him to do penance for his wrongs to the Church on pain of the same sentence. "I know of none of the King's servants who will carry the message to him," wrote John of Salisbury.[1] The Archbishop sent letters from Vézelay commanding Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, and the other bishops to publish the sentence in their dioceses, and he warned the Bishops of Normandy to withdraw from all communion

[1] Materials for the history of Thomas Becket ed. J. C. Robertson, Vol. V., pp. 332–385. Rolls Series.

with those who were under the sentence. There were rumours that if Henry II. was still recalcitrant, the Archbishop would pronounce the sentence of excommunication on him at Vézelay on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen (July 22).[1]

In the early summer of 1190 Richard I. set out from Tours with an army of crusaders to meet Philip Augustus at Vézelay on the octave of the feast of St. John the Baptist; there on July 1 the two Kings promised to keep faith with each other, and they went by Corbigny through Le Morvan on their way to Lyons.[2] As the well-disciplined armies marched through the towns and villages under the hot July sun, the people came out to bring them water to drink, and they asked from what land these well-set-up young men and charming soldiers came.

When the railways were made, the main line from Paris to Marseilles was carried

[1] Bouquet, "Recueil des historiens de la France," Vol. XVI., p. 250.

[2] "Chronicles and Memorials of the reign of Richard I.," ed. Stubbs, Vol. I., pp. 150, 151. Rolls Series.

further to the south-east than the great mediæval highway, so that it might pass through Dijon, the fascinating capital of the dukes of Burgundy. The charm of the country and of the towns of Le Morvan is unknown to the modern traveller who speeds in the train through France. If he would see Vézelay, he must leave the main line at Laroche and go on by Auxerre to Avallon.

In the twelfth century Vézelay was a prosperous walled town which had possibly a population of 10,000,[1] and found lodging also for the throng of pilgrims and merchants who came to the festivals and fairs. Now it is a poor little decayed place with ruined ramparts and less than a thousand inhabitants. But the great church of the monastery still dominates the town, and is one of the glories of France.

The nearest railway station is five and a half miles off at Sermizelles, but the traveller who would get the most beautiful impression

[1] "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," Vol. XVI., pp. 280, 281. 1862.

To face p. 16

THE GREAT DOORWAY OF THE NAVE

Neurdein

of Vézelay and the country should not leave the railway from Auxerre until he arrives at the charming town of Avallon in Le Morvan. It is most picturesquely situated on the edge of a plateau of red granite rock above the narrow valley of the river Cousin, 300 feet below. The drive to Vézelay through Pontaubert, Pierre-Perthuis and St. Père is about twelve miles. The road follows the gorge of the Cousin between wooded slopes and granite rocks to Pontaubert, where there is a fine twelfth-century church of the Templars, it then goes on through more open country where the white Nivernais oxen browse on pastures which in September are mauve with autumn crocuses. At a turn of the road some miles from Vézelay there is a striking view of the isolated hill, with the long line of the church and its towers outlined against the sky. At Pierre Perthuis, the road crosses a bridge 100 feet above the rocky gorge of the Cure with the Roman bridge at its side, far below, and passes by an old fortified gateway on to the village of St. Père-sous-

Vézelay on the left bank of the Cure, where an English army was encamped in 1360. The church of St. Pierre was built in the thirteenth century, and is one of the finest examples of the First Pointed style of Gothic in Burgundy.[1] In the west front there is a rose window and the great gable above it is filled with beautiful sculptured figures. The tall tower flanks the west front and is built over a bay of the north aisle; the three upper stages of the tower are open and the wooden spire is modern. A lovely open porch with three entrances and traceried windows was added in the fourteenth century. The nave has a fine ribbed vault, and the aisles are continued around the apse of the choir, opening out into chapels behind it. The arches of the apse were rebuilt in the fifteenth century. This church is said to have been built at the expense of the monks of Vézelay, as a chapel in honour of the Virgin. It did not become the parish church until the

[1] C. Porée, "L'Abbaye de Vézelay," pp. 81–89. "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," Vol. LVI., pp. 285–309.

sixteenth century, when the older parish church of St. Père was ruined in the wars of religion. The lower part of the walls of that church enclose a disused cemetery at the south end of the village; according to tradition it stood on the site of the nunnery founded by Count Gerard and his wife Bertha.

From St. Père the road winds slowly up the hill and enters Vézelay at the *place* or open space at the bottom of the town, outside the old Porte du Barle or St. Étienne, of which two pilasters still remain.[1] The Grande Rue Saint Étienne is a long steep street leading straight from the *place* to the top of the hill, and a climb up it brings the traveller suddenly to another open space, the Parvis de la Madeleine, where he faces the west front of the great church.

A sketch of the early history of Vézelay will throw light on the building of the church. The monastery was founded by Count Gerard and his wife Bertha. Gerard de Roussillon

[1] "Congrès Archéologique de France tenue à Avallon en 1907," p. 25.

was the hero of a famous Chanson de Geste in which his great enemy was Charles the Bald, King of the West Franks, with whom he fought desperate battles, one of which was at Valbeton, close to St. Père-sous-Vézelay.[1] Gerard's castle of Roussillon was on Mont Lassois, a hill overhanging the left bank of the river about three and a half miles below Chatillon-sur-Seine. The tale of his great deeds and his misfortunes in the Chanson de Geste is fiction, and even his name of Roussillon is an invention, yet he was an important historical personage, and a well-known contemporary of Charles the Bald.[2] During the lives of two sons of the Emperor Lothaire, from 855 to 869, Count Gerard governed the kingdom of Provence in their name, but in 870 he refused his consent to the treaty between the Emperor Louis and King Charles the Bald by which Provence fell to the latter. Charles marched against him and besieged Vienne, which was gallantly defended by Gerard's

[1] Bédier, "Les Légendes épiques," Vol. III., pp. 3–92.

[2] A. Longnon, "Gerard de Roussillon dans l'histoire," Revue Historique, Vol. VIII., pp. 241–279. 1878.

wife Bertha until further resistance was useless, and the Count agreed to surrender it. At the beginning of the new year, Gerard and Bertha went away by boat down the Rhone, to Avignon probably, where Gerard died between March 5, 877 and 879.

About 860 Gerard and Bertha founded two religious houses, one for monks and the other for nuns, who should live a strict life according to the rule of St. Benedict.[1] Both were on lands in the kingdom of Charles the Bald. The monastery was at Pothières on the Seine close to Mont Lassois, and the nunnery was on the Cure at St. Père-sous-Vézelay. As the monarchy was weak, Count Gerard followed the example of other founders and put both Pothières and Vézelay under the protection of the papacy after his death, pledging each house to pay yearly to the papal court the sum of a silver pound, in value about a franc.[2] In 868 Charles the Bald

[1] L. d'Achery, "Spicilegium," III., 446–451, cf. Revue Historique, Vol. VIII., p. 256.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 452–460, cf. Schreiber, Kurie and Kloster im 12 Jahrhundert, p. 6.

gave the first royal charter to Vézelay and confirmed the lands and privileges which the founders had secured for the abbess and nuns.[1] Some years later the nunnery was destroyed by Saracen invaders, and in 872 or 873 the founders built a monastery on the top of the hill of Vézelay for monks who should keep the rule of St. Benedict and possess the lands and privileges of the nuns.[2] The church was dedicated by Pope John VIII. in 878, probably on his way back to Italy after the Council of Troyes in September, for the bull in which he confirmed the privileges of Vézelay was dated September 29.[3]

These privileges were very valuable. When the Abbot died the monks could elect his successor, and notify their choice to the Pope for his approval without any reference either to the King or to the Bishop of Autun, and no one, whether King, Bishop, or any other person, had a right to take any gift or

[1] Bouquet, "Recueil," VIII., p. 608.

[2] L. d'Achery, "Spicilegium," III., p. 527.

[3] Labbe, "Nova Bibliotheca Manuscriptorum," Vol. I., p. 395, "Spicilegium," III., pp. 461–463.

fee on any occasion whatsoever. Count Gerard excluded the Bishop of Autun from all power over Vézelay, and John VIII. forbade the Bishop to go there to celebrate mass in public, unless he was invited by the Abbot, or to demand lodging as a right.

For a hundred and fifty years the monastery had an obscure existence as an independent Benedictine house. Then a first attempt was made to bring Vézelay under the influence of Cluny, which was already the most famous monastery, not only in Burgundy but in Western Europe. Like Vézelay, Cluny was close to the great road through France to Italy, for it was twelve miles N.W. of Macon. It was founded in 910 by William, Duke of Aquitaine, for monks who should live a regular life according to the rule of St. Benedict.[1] The Duke desired that they should build an exceeding pleasant place and shew works of mercy daily to the poor and needy and to pilgrims and travellers.

[1] "Recueil des Chartes de Cluny," ed. Bernard et Bruel, I., p. 124.

The fame of the good lives of the monks was rapidly spread abroad, and lands, property and privileges of every kind were granted to the monastery which was fortunate in having a succession of great abbots. Kings and princes, dukes, counts and bishops asked them to send monks to new foundations and to restore discipline in many monasteries. In 937 seventeen monasteries were dependent on Cluny; in 994 the number had increased to thirty-seven; in 1049 five new monasteries and twenty-three old foundations had been added. Under the most famous of the abbots, St. Hugh, who ruled for sixty years, from 1049 to 1109, the Order of Cluny consisted of two hundred monasteries, with a number of dependent priories,[1] and these were not only in France but in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Spain and England.

Sometimes the Cluniac reformers met with a strenuous resistance from the monks to whom they were sent. In 1027 Landry,

[1] Heimbucher, "Die Orden und Congregationen," I., pp. 243–245.

Count of Nevers, invited the Cluniacs to Vézelay, and when he put Abbot Odo and some Cluniac monks in possession of the monastery, he expelled Herman, Abbot of Vézelay, and his monks without even consulting the Bishop of Autun.[1] The Bishop was so incensed that he excommunicated the new monks of Vézelay and put all the churches belonging to Cluny in his diocese under an interdict. William, Abbot of Dijon, one of the keenest of the Cluniac reformers, reported the circumstances to Odilo, Abbot of Cluny, and warned him that the Bishop was stirring up friends as well as enemies against him, for the general opinion was that the Abbot of Vézelay ought not to have been thus summarily deprived of his functions. The Abbot of Cluny decided to recall Abbot Odo and the Cluniac monks from Vézelay, and the Count of Nevers offered no opposition; so Abbot Herman returned with his monks, and the monastery was independent for another thirty years. St. Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, had great

[1] Bouquet, "Recueil," X., p. 505.

influence with the Popes, and in 1059 Stephen IX. made Vézelay subject to Cluny.[1] Urban II.[2] and Paschal II.,[3] who had both been monks at Cluny, confirmed this dependence, but they allowed Vézelay to remain an abbey instead of being reduced to a priory like many other monasteries which were put under the rule of the Abbots of Cluny.

In 1103 Paschal II. decreed "after the example of his predecessors," that the Abbots of Vézelay should take counsel with the Abbots of Cluny instead of with the Popes before deciding any question concerning the consecration of the monastery and of the churches in the territory of Vézelay, and the ordination of the monks and clergy either in the monastery or elsewhere.[4] The Abbots of Vézelay might get chrism and holy oil from whatever bishop they preferred. On the death of the Abbot his successor was to be

[1] L'Huillier, "Vie de St. Hugues," pp. 87, 89.

[2] "Bibliotheca Cluniacensis," ed. Marrier and Duchesne, p. 516.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 570; *cf.* also Quantin, "Cartulaire de l'Yonne," II., p. 41.

[4] Quantin, op. cit., *ibid.*

freely elected by the monks under the direction of the Abbot of Cluny and consecrated either by the Pope or with the advice of the Abbot of Cluny. Until 1162, when Alexander III. severed the bond between Vézelay and Cluny,[1] the Abbots of Cluny appear to have exercised a controlling influence over the elections; several rulers of Vézelay had been monks of Cluny, and when, in 1129, the choice of the monks of Vézelay fell upon Baldwin, it was not confirmed by the Abbot of Cluny. For the space of two years there was trouble and strife in the monastery and many of the monks were sent away in chains to Provence, Lorraine, Germany and elsewhere.[2] The Abbot of Cluny appealed to the Count of Nevers and to Pope Innocent II., who put an end to the scandal in 1131 by nominating the subprior of Cluny, Alberic, as abbot of Vézelay. St. Bernard wrote to congratulate the Pope on having shown himself unmoved alike by the tumult of the people in arms,

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 572, 573.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 570.

the rage and importunity of the monks and the corrupting power of money.[1]

In the few years between the failure and the success of the Abbots of Cluny in bringing Vézelay under their influence, the monastery suddenly sprang into fame. It was sorely in need of reform, when Abbot Herman died in 1037, and the choice of his successor seems to have been eagerly discussed at a council in the diocese of Autun.[2] At last a monk named Geoffrey was elected, a man of spiritual force and of practical capacity, and during his rule people from far and near began to flock to Vézelay to worship at the shrine of St. Mary Magdalen.

The veneration of relics in the Middle Ages was so great that pilgrims came from distant lands to offer prayers and gifts at the shrines of saints. Monks and priests contended for the possession of relics which would bring fame and wealth to their churches. There are many strange stories of the theft

[1] Bouquet, "Recueil," XV., p. 562.

[2] "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," Vol. XVI., p. 466.

of relics. In 655 the Abbot of the French monastery of Fleury sent one of his monks to Monte Cassino to bring away the body of the founder of western monasticism, St. Benedict of Nursia; the monastery was then desolate, as it had been burnt by the Lombards, and Aigulph returned in triumph with his spoil to Fleury, which was afterwards generally known as St. Benoît-sur-Loire.[1]

There is no trace in the Latin world of any special place for the cult of St. Mary Magdalen before the middle of the eleventh century.[2] Her name appears for the first time in a bull of Leo IX., dated April 27, 1050, in which he confirmed the privileges of his predecessors to Abbot Geoffrey and his successors of the monastery of Vézelay, "which is in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in veneration of His Mother and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and of the blessed Mary Magdalen."[3]

[1] Rocher, "Histoire de l'Abbaye de St. Benoît-sur-Loire," pp. 32–37.

[2] Cf. the remarkable study of the legend of St. Mary Magdalen by Monseigneur Duchesne, "Annales du Midi," Vol. V., pp. 1–33 (1893), VI., pp. 351–360.

[3] "Spicilegium," III., p. 468.

There were stories of prisoners who believed that they were set free through the intervention of St. Mary Magdalen, and went to Vézelay to offer their chains and fetters in her sanctuary and from this metal Abbot Geoffrey made a screen around her altar. Even in the eleventh century men wondered how the body of the saint, who had lived in Judea, had been brought to Vézelay, and the monks first told them simply that with God nothing was impossible. The early miracles were written by a monk who told how the saint appeared to him, saying, "I am she whom many men believe to be here." It was only natural to attribute the gift of the great treasure of the body of St. Mary Magdalen to the founders of Vézelay, who had brought the relics of other saints. It was said that after a vision a prior and three monks crossed the seas, and brought the body from Judea to Vézelay, and Count Gerard and his wife built the monastery as a shrine for the relics of the saint.

But by chance a monk of Vézelay, who was

on a journey in Provence, came to St. Maximin, twenty-three miles south-east of Aix, and in the crypt of the church he saw a sarcophagus which is still in existence, and is in reality the tomb of a Gallo-Roman family of the fifth or sixth century. On one side is sculptured the scene of Pilate washing his hands, but the monk mistook Pilate for Christ and the figure offering him the ewer for St. Mary Magdalen with her box of ointment, and believed that he saw before him the empty tomb of the saint.

A new story was written to explain how it happened that her body was buried at St. Maximin and afterwards taken to Vézelay. St. Maximin is said to have been one of our Lord's seventy-two disciples, and to have been chosen by St. Mary Magdalen as her protector. After the martyrdom of St. Stephen they embarked for Marseilles and came to the county of Aix, where they preached the gospel and were both buried in the crypt of St. Maximin. The Bishop of Autun visited Vézelay and preached on the merits of St. Mary Magdalen.

Abbot Odo's brother, a knight named Aleaume, said that he had seen her tomb; so the Abbot besought the Bishop and his brother to get the body of the saint for his monastery. Aleaume set out with an escort of monks and knights, and succeeded in bringing away the bodies of St. Mary Magdalen and St. Maximin, although the Saracens were then ravaging Provence. In 1038 St. Maximin became a priory dependent on the Benedictine monastery of St. Victor at Marseilles, and apparently the monks of Vézelay afterwards judged it prudent to abandon their claim to the body of St. Maximin. They said that Count Gerard and Abbot Odo sent a monk named Badilo to the church of St. Maximin to fetch the relics of St. Mary Magdalen.

In the middle of the thirteenth century the monks of St. Maximin spread a story that the body of the saint had never left Provence. In 1265 the Bishops of Auxerre and Panéade were invited to Vézelay to open the shrine in the presence of witnesses, and they found the bones of a woman with a certificate of

authenticity from King Charles the Bald which had probably been put there recently by the monks. There was a solemn translation of the relics in the presence of Louis IX. and several princes, the papal legate and other bishops. The monks of St. Maximin forged a document which they put into a sarcophagus, and the Counts of Provence patronised the new cult of St. Mary Magdalen. The pilgrimage to the shrine at Vézelay steadily declined, and the fortunes of the monastery and the town suffered in consequence.

There was no more popular pilgrimage in France in the twelfth century than to Vézelay. Pilgrims came in thousands on the feasts of Easter and St. Mary Magdalen (July 22), and sometimes the Bishop of Autun was there to celebrate high mass and preach a sermon.[1] Minstrels sang to the pilgrims of the legendary deeds of Count Gerard de Roussillon,[2] merchants came to traffic with them, and the town, which was built on the steep slopes of

[1] "Spicilegium," p. 519.

[2] Bédier, "Les Legendes épiques," Vol. II., pp. 91, 92.

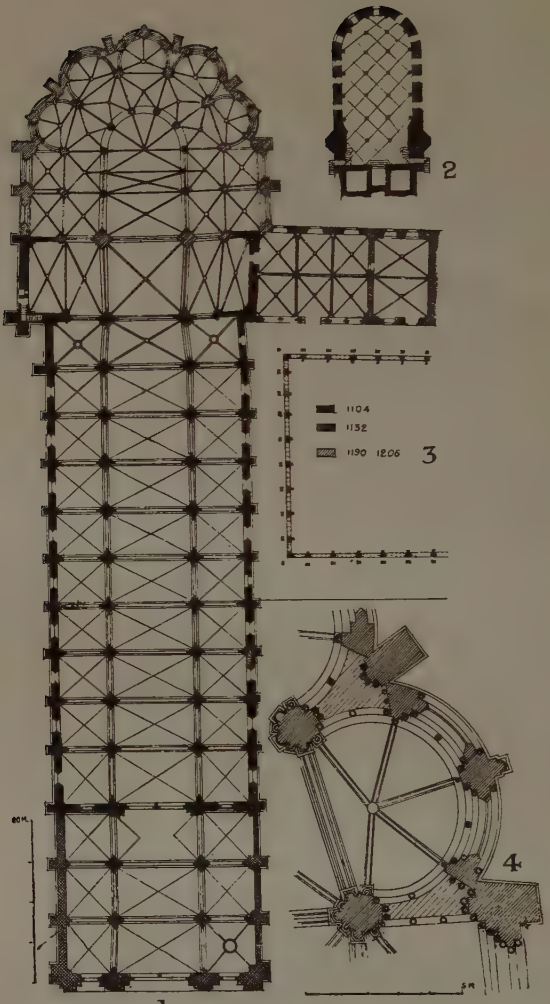
the hill below the monastery, is reckoned to have had ten thousand inhabitants.[1]

Owing to the offerings of the pilgrims and the wealth of Vézelay, the monks were able to build the great church which faces the traveller who climbs the steep Grande Rue St. Étienne, and comes out on the open space before the west front.

The exterior which was very striking in the distant view of Vézelay is not so impressive close by, but it has a character of stern simplicity and strength.[2] The massive Romanesque west front is pierced by three round arched doorways. Over the centre doorway there is a fine pointed gable of the thirteenth century filled with five great statues above five lancet windows with a statue between each. The towers stand on each side of the gable over the north and south doorways, but the north tower is now in-

[1] Bulletin, Vol. XVI., p. 280.

[2] The architectural description of the church is taken from "L'Abbaye de Vézelay" by Charles Porée (Petites Monographes des Grands Édifices de France). *Cf.* also "Congrès Archéologique de France tenue à Avallon en 1907," pp. 24–43, and Gally, "Voyage dans l'Avallonais—Vézelai Monastique."



PLAN OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF VÉZELAY

(BY PERMISSION OF M. LEFÈVRE-PONTALIS)

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complete and the first stage was crowned with a pyramidal cap by the great architect, Viollet-le-Duc, who also finished the south tower with an open balustrade. There is a tradition that the north tower was destroyed in the wars of religion, but, as in many other churches in France, it may never have been finished. Between 1840 and 1856, when Viollet-le-Duc carried out the restoration which was needed to save the building from ruin, he swept away the traces of the thirteenth-century plan for altering the towers after the gable was completed. The south tower, now used as a belfry, has a second Romanesque stage, and a third stage which was added in the thirteenth century.

The doors of the west front lead into the narthex or galilee which was built on to the west end of the nave, just as the galilee chapel was built on at the west end of the nave of the cathedral church of Durham. The narthex of Vézelay is eighty-two feet long. Three bays of pointed arches separate the aisles from the middle of the building. Over the aisles are the open galleries of the triforium which

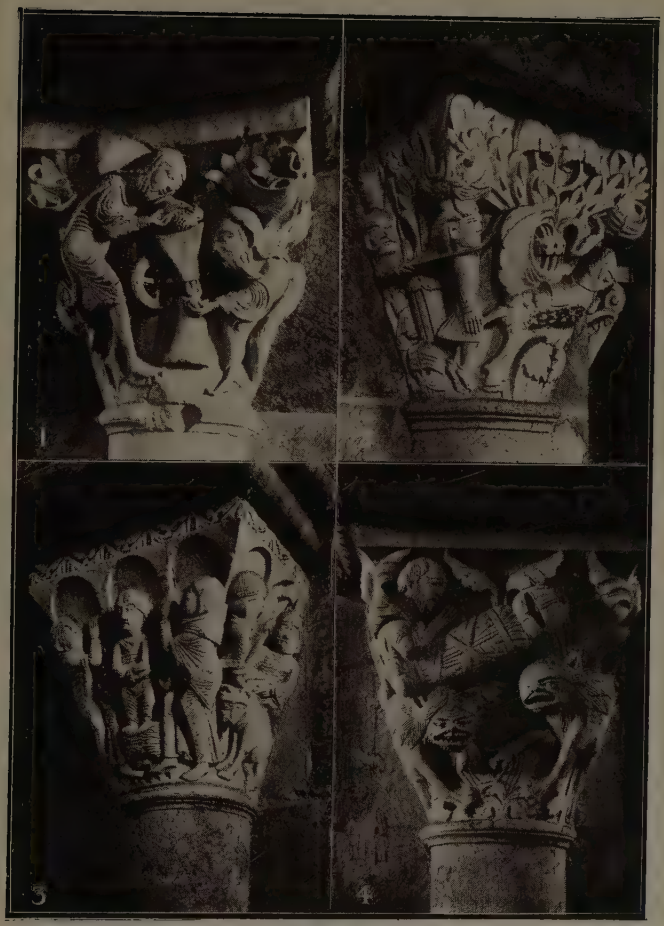
is carried across the east wall and opens into the nave. The whole space in the east wall between the arches on each side and from the floor to the vault is filled by the most marvellous Romanesque doorway in France. It is divided by a central pillar on which stands St. John the Baptist just under the feet of Christ, Who sits in majesty on a throne in the tympanum of the doorway. There is a nimbus around His head and rays of light from His outstretched hands strike the heads of the Apostles, each also with a nimbus. Their draperies are stirred by the rushing mighty wind which was heard on the Feast of Pentecost. A long procession covers the lintel below the tympanum, among them are archers and knights, men carrying a vessel, a fish, and a seal, four men grouped round an ox, and strange figures with long ears, representing perhaps all the peoples of the world. Other groups in medallions surround the tympanum, and outside them are figures representing the signs of the zodiac and the labours of the months.

Smaller doorways lead from the aisles of the narthex into the nave. Scenes from the Nativity of our Lord are sculptured on the tympanum of the south door; His meeting with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus appears below His Ascension on the tympanum of the north door.

When the double doors in the centre of the east wall are pushed open, the unbroken view up the vast Romanesque nave into the Gothic choir is most impressive. The nave is 200 feet long, 46 feet wide and 72 feet high, and it is divided into ten bays. The high groined vaults are separated by heavy transverse arches which rest on vaulting shafts springing from the ground. The builders did not provide for the concentrated thrust of the vaults, and at the end of the twelfth century it was counteracted by adding the outside flying buttresses. A stringcourse of the beautiful Burgundian rose ornament separates the nave arcade from the blank wall space below the large round arched windows of the clerestory. The low groined

vaults of the aisles are also divided by heavy transverse arches.

The capitals in the nave and in the narthex are all different, and very remarkable. Among the scenes chosen from the Old Testament are the stories of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, the worship of the golden calf, the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter, the killing of Agag, King of the Amalekites, the fight between David and Goliath, the death of Absalom, David and Bathsheba, the hanging of Haman, Daniel in the lions' den. The Apocrypha is represented in the stories of Tobit and of Judith, and the New Testament in the scene of the woman taken in adultery and the story of Lazarus, and the release of St. Peter from prison by the angel. Incidents in the lives of the hermits St. Paul and St. Anthony, and of St. Benedict, St. Martin and St. Hubert appear on several capitals. On others the sculptor chose scenes of open-air life: a miller loaded with a sack of grain which he puts in to be ground, and another man pouring the flour into a sack as it comes out



Neurdein

CAPITALS OF THE NAVE AND NARTHEX

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from the hopper. Men come with baskets to gather thick clusters of grapes, and another man holds a chest with three openings representing the wine-press.

The choir is one of the earliest examples of Gothic architecture in Burgundy. There are some features which mark the period of transition, but the lightness and elegance of the pointed arches resting on tall monolith pillars offer a striking contrast with the dominant strength of the nave. There are two rectangular bays in the choir before the curve of the apse, and it is surrounded by a beautiful ambulatory opening first into two square-ended chapels on each side and then into five round chapels radiating from the apse.

Beneath the choir is a crypt of the eleventh century showing the length of the Romanesque choir, for it was extended eastwards when the Gothic choir was built.

The transepts of two bays project very slightly beyond the nave. A tower built over the last bay of the south aisle abuts

against the south transept and rises by one stage above its roof. This south transept was a little shorter than the north, because the ground was already covered by the chapterhouse. This is a rectangular building of two bays divided into a nave and aisles by the pillars which carry the vault; it has been a chapel since the seventeenth century, and during the winter months it is used as the parish church. The arcade of the east walk of the cloister as far as the chapterhouse was restored by Viollet-le-Duc in the Romanesque style, although the cloister had been rebuilt in the thirteenth century. The two-storied building next to the chapterhouse has been restored for the sacristy, but nothing more remains of the cloister or of the monastic buildings.

The restoration of Vézelay was carried out for the Commission des Monuments Historiques by Viollet-le-Duc between 1840 and 1856, when the building was in a very dangerous condition. He altered the external appearance of the apse by lowering the roofs of the chapels which

sloped straight down from below the clerestory windows, and by inserting circular windows in the wall space which was thus exposed. The first builders of the choir had concealed their buttresses under these sloping roofs, but it was soon discovered that these were insufficient to bear the thrust of the vault, and the flying buttresses of the choir were added.

There is a divergence of opinion about the dates of the building of the church. The archives of the monastery were probably destroyed when it was sacked by the Huguenots, and the chronicler who wrote so much about the relations of the monastery with the outside world in the middle of the twelfth century rarely mentioned the church. In the short Chronicle of Vézelay it is recorded that in 878 Pope John VIII. dedicated the church of Vézelay, probably on his way back from the Council of Troyes in September; for the bull in which he confirmed the privileges of the monastery is dated September 29.[2]

[1] Labbe, "Nova Bibliotheca Manuscriptorum," I., p. 395.
[2] "Spicilegium," III., p. 463.

The next reference to the church is in the same Chronicle; in 1104 the church which Abbot Artald built was dedicated.[1] In 1120 a fire suddenly broke out in the church of St. Mary Magdalen at Vézelay at twilight on July 21, the eve of the feast of the saint when the building was filled with pilgrims, and the chronicler of St. Maixent in Anjou records that 1127 men and women perished in the flames.[2] Abbot Rainald (1106–1128) is described on his tomb at Cluny as "formerly Abbot and reparator," of the monastery of Vézelay. When Peter Leonis, who became the Antipope Anacletus II. in 1130, was staying at Vézelay, he spent long hours watching the workmen who were pulling down the walls of the offices of the monastery to make way for the new buildings. Hugh the Poitevin, the historian of Vézelay, stated plainly that Stephen, Bishop of Autun,

[1] Labbe, "Nova Bibliotheca Manuscriptorum," I., p. 395.

[2] Mabille et Marchegay, "Chroniques des églises d'Anjou," pp. 119, 429. Cf. Chronologia Monachi Altissiodiensis ed. N. Camuze, p. 79.

[3] "Gallia Christiana," IV., p. 469.

consecrated the "ecclesia peregrinorum," when Innocent II. was at Vézelay, *i.e.* in 1132.[1]

It has usually been assumed by archæologists that the "ecclesia peregrinorum" was the narthex, and therefore that the nave was the church which was dedicated in 1104 and built during the rule of Abbot Artald (1096–1106).[2] Monsieur Porée realized that the completion of the present nave in the short space of eight years was very singular, and he explained that the nave, if not finished, was far enough advanced for consecration. Monsieur de Lasteyrie, who is the greatest authority in France on Romanesque architecture, has pointed out that the present nave is not the church of Abbot Artald, for that building was destroyed by the fire of 1120; Abbot Rainald rebuilt it, and the present nave is the "ecclesia peregrinorum," which was consecrated in 1132.[3] The work of

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 515, 518.

[2] Porée, op. cit., pp. 14–16.

[3] R. de Lasteyrie, "L'Architecture religieuse en France à l'époque Romane," p. 425.

carving the capitals and other sculptures continued long afterwards. At the Congrès Archéologique de France which was held at Avallon in 1907, Monsieur Lefèvre-Pontalis suggested that only the Romanesque choir and transepts were finished in 1104; the masonry of the two remaining Romanesque angles of the present transepts is quite different from the pillars of the nave, and the rich carving of the nave suggests that the building was not in use before 1120.[1] Monsieur Anthyme St. Paul has given the date 1122–1130 for the rebuilding of the nave after the fire.[2] Monsieur Enlart wrote that the nave was rebuilt after 1120 and the narthex was built between 1132 and 1150.[3] 1150 was the year when the quarrel between Abbot Pons and the Count of Nevers became serious, and in the next few years it was impossible for building to continue. Hugh the Poitevin

[1] "Congrès archéologique de France tenue à Avallon en 1907," p. 28.

[2] "Histoire monumentale de la France," p. 126 (ed. 1911).

[3] C. Enlart, "Manuel d'archéologie Française, L'Architecture religieuse," I., pp. 433, 630.

stated that although this Abbot's predecessors did more than he in acquiring possessions and in building, yet he laboured more than all of them.[1] This remark does not warrant Monsieur Porée's statement that the narthex was certainly finished in 1138, the year in which Pons was elected Abbot.

There is also some divergence of opinion about the date of the rebuilding of the choir. M. Viollet-le-Duc suggested that it took place during the rule of Abbot Hugh (1199–1206) because he was deposed by Innocent III.; he piled up debts for the monastery, and this impoverishment was perhaps due to the expenses of building.[2] Monsieur Porée accepts this view. But in the bull the Pope stated very plainly that the Abbot had wasted most of the treasure left by his predecessor; besides piling up debts he was an evil liver and guilty of simony.[3] Discipline was very lax and the chief officers of the monastery were guilty

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 507; *cf.* Porée, op. cit. p. 15.

[2] Porée, op. cit. p. 16.

[3] Innocent III. "Epistolæ, 'Migne,' Patrologia Latina," Vol. CCXV., pp. 1185, 1186.

of such acts that the Pope ordered that they should be ejected and sent to other monasteries. It is difficult to believe that the new choir was built during these years. It is far more probable that the work was begun and possibly completed under Abbot Girard (1171–1198). The tomb of St. Mary Magdalen was in the crypt, and in 1165 a fire broke out there which did some damage but did not spread to the choir above.[1] In the same year a monk of Vézelay was travelling about the country with some of the relics of his monastery to collect money for the building of the church.[2] Monsieur Enlart gave the date 1180 for the choir, and Monsieur Anthyme St. Paul suggested 1198–1200 for the vaulting.[3]

Other abbots besides Hugh had to contend with debt and difficulties in the thirteenth century, and I have been unable to discover who began to alter the west front and left it unfinished.

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 616.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 589.

[3] C. Enlart, op. cit., p. 647; Anthyme St. Paul, Viollet-le-Duc, p. 136.

The history of the monastery in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is obscure, but it was a time of decadence. In 1538, at the request of King Francis I., Pope Paul III. issued a bull by which Vézelay was converted from a house of Benedictine monks into a college of secular canons. The larger share of the revenues was received by ecclesiastics who held the title of Abbot but were under no obligation to reside at Vézelay or even to visit the place.

The college suffered from misfortune in the sixteenth century.[1] In 1569 the town was seized by the Huguenots, and according to tradition they turned the great church into cavalry barracks and plundered and burnt the muniments. Abbot de Rochefort restored the church very badly in the early years of the seventeenth century, and about 1760 Abbot Berthier pulled down the monastic buildings. The college was suppressed in 1790.

[1] "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences Historiques de l'Yonne," Vol. XXII., pp. 377–395. 1868.

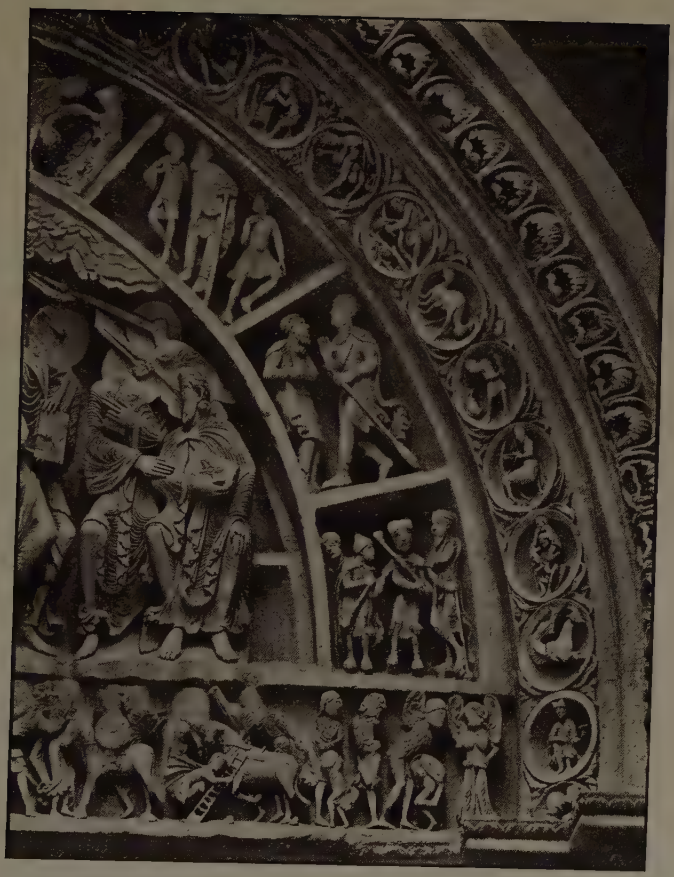
CHAPTER II

ABBOT PONS (1138–1161)

ABBOT PONS was the son of Maurice de Montboissier and Raingard of Semur.[1] The lords of Montboissier, near Sauxillanges, belonged to one of the oldest and most powerful familes in Auvergne; Raingard came of the family of the lords of Semur en Brionnais, and on her mother's side she was related to the Counts of Nevers.[2] Both

[1] Migne, "Patrologia Latina," Vol. CLXXXIX., pp. 9–11; *cf.* "Memoires de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Chalon-sur-Saone," Vol. IV., pp. 121–8, 201–372. The historian of Vézelay in one place ("Spicilegium," III., p. 507) describes Pons as "frater uterinus," *i.e.* half brother of Peter the Venerable and Jordan, but he included a letter (p. 490) in which he is called "germanus," *i.e.* brother. Peter the Venerable wrote to Pons as his "frater germanus." *Cf.* Lib. I. Ch. XVI. Pons gave a donation to the priory of Coulonges which was approved by his four brothers for the keeping of an anniversary for themselves and their parents; *cf.* "Cartulaire de la Charité," ed. R. de Lespinasse, pp. 136 and 138.

[2] "Memoires de la Société Eduenne," Vol. XVI., pp. 114, 115.



Sabon

DETAIL OF THE TYMPANUM OF THE CENTRAL DOOR

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Maurice and Raingard lived under the influence of religion. Maurice went on pilgrimages, and in middle age Raingard became a nun of Marcigny, which was founded as the first Cluniac house for women by her uncle St. Hugh. He was the famous Abbot of Cluny who ruled that monastery for sixty years from 1049 to 1109 and sent the first Cluniac monks to England in 1077, when William de Warenne and his wife Gundreda founded Lewes priory. Four of the sons of Maurice and Raingard became monks, and a fifth, Heraclius, was a canon of Lyons when he was elected Archbishop of that province in 1153. Jordan was Abbot of Chaise-Dieu, Armanus was Prior of Cluny and afterwards Abbot of Manlieu, and the most famous of the brothers was the eldest son, Peter the Venerable, who was Abbot of Cluny from 1122 to 1156. Peter had a strong influence on the life of the younger brother, who had the Latin name of Pontius, in French Pons or Ponce. Peter was a boy of great promise, and he was sent to be educated in the Cluniac priory of Sauxillanges; he

resolved to become a monk, and he received benediction from the Abbot of Cluny about 1109. He held office at Vézelay under his kinsman, Abbot Rainald of Semur, and from there he went to be Prior of the Cluniac priory of Domaine, and in 1122, when he was about thirty, he was elected Abbot of Cluny. There is no record of the early years of Pons. He was educated at Vézelay as a boy, and afterwards lived for nearly ten years at Cluny with his brother, and then left him after a quarrel.[1] He was a monk at St. Michel de Cluse, a monastery founded by his great-grandfather in the province of Cuneo in Piedmont, when he was elected Abbot of Vézelay in 1138, through the influence of Peter the Venerable.[2]

The prospects were fair. The monastery was wealthy and famous, and held churches and lands in the dioceses of Autun, Auxerre, Nevers, Macon, Clermont, Bourges, Poitiers,

[1] Migne, "Patrologia Latina," Vol. CLXXXIX., pp. 85, 86, and "Spicilegium," III., p. 568.

[2] Labbe, "Nova Bibliotheca Manuscriptorum," I., p. 395; "Spicilegium," III., p. 568.

Saintes, Sens, Noyon and Beauvais.[1] The country for some miles around Vézelay was the Abbot's sovereign state,[2] and the bounds of the poté de Vézelay were marked by great crosses at Asquins and elsewhere.

In the rule of St. Benedict the Abbot was the Father in God of his monks. He was chosen for his virtuous life, his learning and his wisdom, and the monks owed him absolute obedience. He appointed monks as officers of the monastery to help him in the administration of its spiritual and temporal affairs. St. Benedict thought of the monastery as of a place apart from the life of the world, though he knew that monks must go on journeys, and that it was sometimes necessary to buy and sell.

In the twelfth century the Abbot was a feudal lord in a society in which strength prevailed. Excommunication was a spiritual weapon which might be used to bring material ruin on an enemy, but it was well to have the

[1] Quantin, "Cartulaire de l'Yonne," II., pp. 39–42.

[2] Seignobos, "Le régime feodale en Bourgogne," pp. 12, 13.

protection of armed men when the monastery and its lands were suddenly raided. An Abbot often entered into an agreement with the most powerful lord in his neighbourhood by which the lord had the droit de garde and the droit de gîte; in exchange for his defence of the monastery, he had the right of lodging and maintenance for himself and his men-at-arms. He also had rights of jurisdiction, and his court was a tribunal of first instance and a court of appeal in cases concerning the Abbot and monks.[1]

The most powerful neighbour of Vézelay was the Count of Nevers, who acknowledged the Duke of Burgundy as his feudal lord for the County of Auxerre. The Abbots of Vézelay often rendered spontaneous homage to the Counts of Nevers, and they conferred many favours on the Counts, hoping that in return they would hasten to defend the monastery against enemies; but there was no legal bond.[2] The monastery was under the

[1] Luchaire, "Manuel des Institutions Françaises," pp. 75, 278, 287.

[2] "Spicilegium," III., p. 529.

protection of the papacy, but as the Abbots had sometimes invoked the help of the Counts, they claimed the rights which were exercised by other lords who had taken monasteries under their protection; these were lodging and maintenance for themselves and their men-at-arms when they came to Vézelay, their permission for the election of an Abbot, and the recognition of their jurisdiction.

In 1119 Abbot Rainald visited Louis VI. at Senlis and received a charter from him confirming the privileges of Vézelay and protecting the monastery from any infringement by any count, viscount, duke or other power. They were forbidden to enter the lands of the monastery to hear causes, to demand lodging, to exact tolls, or for any purpose of justice or finance. The King granted whatever payments might be due to his treasury for the benefit of the poor and the uses of the monks.[1]

The Abbot was supreme lord within the

[1] Quantin, "Cartulaire de l'Yonne," I., p. 226; Luchaire, "Louis le Gros, Annales de sa vie et de sa règne," p. 121.

poté de Vézelay. Owing to the fame of the monastery the town was very prosperous and many of the burgesses were wealthy men, but they were under servile obligations like the peasants in the villages outside, and were subject to the absolute rule of the Abbot, who judged them in his court and taxed them as he chose. In 1106 Abbot Artald was murdered by the son of the provost of Vézelay, because he imposed on the townsfolk the service of lodging the Abbot's guests at Easter and on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen.[1] Abbot Hugh of Cluny, who was then over eighty years of age, crossed the Alps and appeared before Pope Paschal II. at the Council of Guastalla, in the territory of Modena, in October, 1106, to demand the punishment of the murderers. Paschal II. wrote a general letter to the bishops of France rebuking them because some of them had permitted men who had slain their priest and abbot to live in their dioceses, and bidding them drive these evildoers into exile.[2]

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 471, 545, 622. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 471.

In the early years of the twelfth century in France the burgesses of many towns were struggling to free themselves from the absolute power of their feudal lords. The burgesses of Vézelay formed a confederation against Abbot Alberic and drew in the peasants of the villages outside the town. In 1137 both parties agreed to submit their differences to arbitration, and the Abbot left a record of the proceedings for his successors.[1] The judges who came to settle the dispute were the Bishop of Auxerre, the Abbots of the Cistercian monasteries of Pontigny, Rigny, and Trois-Fontaines, Godfrey, Prior of Clairvaux, afterwards Bishop of Langres, William II. Count of Nevers, the Viscount of Clamecy and other lords. The parties were again at issue about the question of lodging the Abbot's guests at the feasts of Easter and St. Mary Magdalen. The burgesses declared that Abbot Rainald, who was elected after the murder of Abbot Artald, had made a concession, and they were only bound to lodge the household of the

[1] Quantin, "Cartulaire de l'Yonne," I., pp. 313–323.

Count of Nevers and this only once in four years. So they let their houses to merchants and others when they had the opportunity, and the Abbot was forced to hire lodgings for the throng of guests who found no room in the monastery. With regard to the annual tax which the Abbot levied after Christmas on both burgesses and peasants, the burgesses wished to elect every year four different persons of their community to sit with the dean and provost appointed by the Abbot and to assess the amount of the tax to be paid by individual burgesses and peasants. Other grievances concerned trade profits. The burgesses complained that they had to pay dues to the Abbot for the stalls and booths which they put up in the open spaces of the town, and that the Abbot had raised his charges on the tables of the money-changers. He claimed one lamb in every four, and demanded money for the tax on the vintage, instead of wine.

The Abbot complained that the burgesses refused to pay their tithes in full, that they used

marks of different weights, and that some of them had made scales which they let on hire, although they were bound by ancient custom to use the scales of the sacristy. Owing to the betterment of the town the burgesses were able to get higher rents for their houses, but they challenged the Abbot's right to raise his rents.

The judges were men who had naturally less sympathy with the burgesses than with their feudal lord, but they relieved the burgesses of the worst of their servile obligations and set some limits to the Abbot's arbitrary power. In the award they ruled that the burgesses might marry their daughters without paying a tax, that they could be buried without payment to the Abbot, and that they could dispose of their property to kinsmen living in the town if they died without children. As the town was now much larger the burgess who lodged the Abbot's guests at Easter or at the feast of St. Mary Magdalen was exempt in the following year. The burgesses and peasants might fish in the river on certain conditions,

and they had free access to all the woods except such as the Abbot had a right to enclose.

The judges fixed the dues on hay taken for the Abbot's horses as well as on grapes; they forbade the Abbot's officials to gather grapes without their owner's consent, and settled that the keepers of the vineyards should be chosen by the burgesses and approved by the Abbot's officials. The burgesses must pay the wine tax at the feast of St. Martin (Nov. 11) either in lawful wine or at the highest price at which wine was sold in the town. The mark of Cologne was chosen as the standard weight for that coin, and only the ancient weights and measures might be used.

In other respects the award was wholly in the Abbot's favour. The judges ruled that the Abbot had a right to add to the number of the money-changers and to raise the charges on their tables. Like his predecessors he had the right to tax his burgesses and peasants without taking counsel with the burgesses,

and he did them no wrong by denying their right to come between him and his men of St. Père and other villages, for his dealings with his peasants were no concern of the burgesses. The judges commanded the burgesses to choose seven of their number who should swear for themselves and their fellows that they had made no confederation, treaty, or oath against the Church and the Abbot, nor had others to their knowledge.

The burgesses were defeated on the big issues, but they were only waiting for a more favourable opportunity to follow the example of other towns by setting up a Commune. "Commune," wrote Guibert, Abbot of Nogent, "is a new and detestable word, and what it means is this: the men of a lord, who are subject to be taxed by him, only pay their usual dues to him once a year. If they commit any offence, they are quit for a payment fixed by law and they are entirely exempt from all the exactions of money which are usually taken from serfs."[1] The twelfth

[1] "De vita sua," Lib. III., Cap. VII., ed. G. Bourgin, p. 156.

century was the age of the communal movement in France, and it arose because the inhabitants of towns realised the vital necessity of substituting fixed taxation for the arbitrary exploitation of their feudal lord.[1] In its origin the Commune was the sworn association of the burgesses for the purpose of self-government. The richest and most populous towns belonged to bishops and abbots, and with few exceptions the Church was implacably hostile to the Communes; the movement was thus anti-ecclesiastical rather than anti-feudal, and lay lords sometimes associated themselves with the burgesses to weaken the power of the Church. The Papacy was invariably on the side of the Church against the Communes, but the policy of the Crown was uncertain. The Kings opposed Communes on their own domain, but sometimes they favoured Communes in the towns of bishops and abbots because, like the barons, they wanted to limit the power of the Church. Sometimes they

[1] Luchaire, "Les Communes Françaises," pp. 14, 47, 221, 235, 247, 264–275.

were influenced against the Communes by money, and as the Crown was the natural protector of the Church they were sometimes induced to act against the Communes by the Popes.

The burgesses of Vézelay found their opportunity in the quarrels into which Abbot Pons was forced by the Counts of Nevers and the Bishops of Autun. William III., Count of Nevers, incited them to conspire against the Abbot, and in 1152 they set up a Commune which was at first successful and was not finally dissolved until 1155.

The little sovereign state of the poté of Vézelay was independent of the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bishops of Autun. From the seventh century onwards the Popes sometimes put monasteries in other dioceses under the direct jurisdiction of the see of Rome, thus exempting them from the jurisdiction of their own bishop.[1] Owing to the weakness of the monarchy in the ninth

[1] Schreiber, "Kurie und Kloster im 12 Jahrhundert," pp. 1–3, 6, 8, 10, 20, 21, 27.

century founders often secured the privilege of papal protection for monasteries, and this protection sometimes included exemption from the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese and other privileges. In a number of instances, as at Vézelay, the monastery was in the ownership of the papacy and became a part of the real estate of the see of St. Peter.[1] In its origin the exemption was intended to protect monasteries from unfair oppression by bishops, in practice they were withdrawn from the Ordinary's power of punishment. The bishops also disliked exemptions because they were deprived thereby of certain privileges and dues. Two bishops of Autun quarrelled with Abbot Pons about the exemption of Vézelay.

Rivalry between different Orders of monks was another influence in the controversies in which Abbot Pons was engaged. Cluny was at the height of its power at the end of the eleventh century, when several new monastic Orders were founded; they had their origin in a wave of asceticism, and the

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 452–458, 475.

dominance of Cluny was soon threatened by Cîteaux. It was founded in 1098 and became the mother house of an Order which spread so rapidly that at the end of fifty-four years there were 330 houses scattered over France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and England. Like Cluny, Cîteaux was in the duchy of Burgundy, and it was only twelve or fifteen miles from Dijon, the chief town of the dukes; they were generous benefactors of Cîteaux and many of them were buried there.

The greatest of the sons of Cîteaux was St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux from 1115 to 1153. His influence was so remarkable that for many years he was in fact the spiritual ruler of Western Europe. In 1138 he was keenly interested in the election to the vacant see of Langres, since his own monastery of Clairvaux was in the diocese.[1] It is a tangled story, but the candidate favoured by the Duke of Burgundy and other lords was a monk of Cluny, and he was elected. St. Bernard heard that he was a man of doubtful reputation,

[1] Vacandard, "Vie de St. Bernard," II., 26–35.

and he intervened to prevent his consecration at Lyons by the Archbishop of the province. Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, threw his influence on the side of his monk, whom he believed to be absolutely innocent, and in a letter to St. Bernard he told him that he had listened to lying rumours, and asked him if he was really opposing the election on account of the rivalry between Cluny and Cîteaux. St. Bernard triumphed at Rome, for the proceedings at the election were irregular; the chapter of Langres next chose St. Bernard himself, and when he refused to leave Clairvaux, they insisted on having the Prior of Clairvaux, Godfrey de la Roche, who was St. Bernard's cousin. While he was still Prior, Godfrey was one of the judges in the dispute between Abbot Alberic and the burgesses of Vézelay; in after years he was a bitter enemy of Abbot Pons and the monks.

In the judgment of the historian of Vézelay, Abbot Pons laboured more than all his predecessors, for he protected the liberty and possessions of the monastery against many

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spoilers. He was a man of indomitable courage and inflexible will, and in his character there was nothing either of the wisdom or of the weakness of compromise.

The history of the troublous years of his rule was written by Hugh the Poitevin, a monk of Vézelay.[1] He began his work at the command of Abbot Pons, when peace was restored in 1156, and went on writing about the affairs of the monastery until 1167, when he left off abruptly after describing the burning of some heretics. He stated that his object was to write true history as briefly as possible; he had not undertaken the task in any spirit of idleness, for he would far rather have pursued his own studies than have written for the instruction of others. But he remembered that the historian lays up treasure for posterity. He was probably an eye witness of many of the incidents at Vézelay, and he knew the principal personages of the story, so he was able to write a most vivid account of the Commune. He set a high

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 446, 506, 524–526.

value on records, and studied all the papal bulls, charters and letters which he found in the chests of muniments, and he selected the series of documents with which he began the "Historia Vizeliacensis monasterii."[1] His single-minded devotion to Vézelay made him a strong partisan, and he is unsparing in his judgments of men and events. For him the Abbot's enemies were all wicked and impious, and he was often carried away by violent prejudice.

[1] The only extant manuscript of his work is in the public library of the city of Auxerre. It was first printed by Dom Luc d'Achery in the "Spicilegium," III., pp. 446–645, (ed. 1687), and reprinted by the Abbé Migne in "Patrologia Latina," Vol. CXCIV. The folios between 91 and 116 of the manuscript were partly torn away, and Dom Luc d'Achery omitted them altogether. Monsieur Chérest transcribed the parts of the torn folios and printed them in the "Bulletin des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," Vol. XVI., pp. 471–525. 1862.

CHAPTER III

ABBOT PONS AND THE COUNTS OF NEVERS

WILLIAM II. succeeded his grandfather as Count of Nevers in 1100 when he was about twenty-one.[1] He had a very adventurous life and was a man of strangely mixed character. In early youth he attacked the monastery of Molesme and set fire to the buildings, but he made full amends and asked the prayers of the monks before he set out for the Holy Land in 1101. He was the leader of a large army of crusaders, which is said to have numbered fifteen thousand, and was accompanied by many women and children who were going as pilgrims to Jerusalem. The host marched through Italy to Brindisi, crossed to Vallona on the coast of Albania and marched on

[1] R. de Lespinasse, "Le Nivernais et les Comtes de Nevers," I., pp. 198–261.

through the land of the Bulgars to Salonica. The crusaders stayed three days in Constantinople, crossed the Bosphorus and began their march through Asia Minor under a blazing August sun. Their sufferings were terrible, and in a few days they were surrounded by the Turks, who surprised them in a valley and massacred them in large numbers. The Count escaped with his brother and some of his knights and they made their way to Antioch. In the spring the Count went on to Jerusalem and accomplished his pilgrimage and then returned home.

He was loyal to his King all his life and took part in the wars and expeditions of Louis VI. In an expedition against the Sire de Coucy in 1115 he was taken prisoner by a vassal of the Count of Champagne and kept in captivity for four years. While he was in the Castle of Blois he was visited by two of the founders of new monastic Orders, St. Robert of Arbrissel and Bernard of Tiron. In 1130 he was again a prisoner of the Count of Champagne for a short time.

When Louis VII. summoned a great council at Étampes in February, 1147, to arrange for the government of the kingdom while he was away on the Crusade, the choice fell on Louis VII.'s great minister, Suger, Abbot of St. Denis, and William II., Count of Nevers. But for three or four years the Count had determined to leave the world and withdraw to the Grande Chartreuse to prepare for death, and he now refused to accept the regency.

He was a benefactor of many monasteries, but he was always hostile to Vézelay. In 1146 the Count and Abbot Pons agreed to submit their disputes to arbitration.

On the Wednesday after that Easter when Louis VII. and so many crusaders took the cross from St. Bernard at Vézelay, the Count and the Abbot appeared before St. Bernard, Hugh de Til and other persons at the grange of Bessey near Arcy-sur-Cure. The Count claimed that Vézelay was in his advowry, and therefore the Abbot must do justice to him and his men according to the judgment of the Count's court, the Abbot must bring the

men of Vézelay before that court, and in any dispute between the Abbot and his men the Count was the arbiter. The Abbot denied the Count's claims altogether, the monastery was not founded by him or his ancestors and therefore it was not in his advowry. The men of Vézelay were not of his fee, and it had never been the custom of the Church of Vézelay to do suit to the Count's court.[1]

The Count brought forward several other grievances. When his men of the town of Clamecy on the Yonne came to the markets and fairs of Vézelay, and put out their merchandise in the open spaces of the town, the Abbot's collectors took tolls from them by force although they said that they were free from the tolls paid by other men. Hugh de Til declared that the Count had no case. This claim to exemption had been settled in the time of Abbot Rainald when the Count renounced it for a sum of money, he himself was the Count's seneschal[2] and paid him the

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 529–534.
[2] R. de Lespinasse, op. cit., p. 271.

money from the Abbot, when the Count promised that he would never advance it again.

Owners of roads had the right of taking tolls from those who passed along them. The Count claimed that the road from Asquins to Blannay was his, but the Abbot replied that his church had possessed this road and all the lands of Vergy for forty years and more in peace since Hervé de Donzy and Savaric de Vergy had given them to Abbot Artald and laid the deeds on the altar of St. Peter and St. Paul in the presence of many witnesses. The Abbot hanged robbers caught on the road and did justice on other malefactors. As for the road from Précy to the crosses and boundaries which marked the poté or territory of Vézelay the land of Précy was originally owned by the Duke of Burgundy, and the knights who held it of him conveyed it to the Church of Vézelay by gift and by sale. Witnesses from Précy were present and told how they caught six robbers with bad money on them and took them to Vézelay for judgment. Other witnesses appeared to prove

that several roads leading to Vézelay belonged to that Church. The Abbot complained that the Count beset the King's high-road from Auxerre to Vézelay and forced every one to turn aside and travel through his lands by unsafe roads so that he might make money out of the tolls which he levied on the wares of pedlars and merchants. The Count's collectors also robbed the Abbot's men as they passed through Auxerre, and demanded a toll on the wine which he bought there.

There is no record of the award given by St. Bernard and the other arbitrators. However, Count William II. and his son, William III., are said to have promised in the presence of St. Bernard and the Bishop of Auxerre that neither they nor their men would hinder merchants and others who were on the road to Vézelay.[1] William II. entered the Grande Chartreuse in 1147 and died the next year; several writers mentioned his death, but only the historian of Vézelay told the malicious

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 492.

and improbable tale that he was eaten by a dog.[1]

Count William III. set out in 1148 with some of his barons to follow Louis VII. who had gone on the disastrous second crusade.[2] His younger brother was wounded and taken prisoner by the Turks, and never came back. William III. narrowly escaped shipwreck on his way home. Abbot Pons greeted him with a gift of money to relieve his poverty, and invited him to Vézelay, when the Count told the monks in the chapterhouse how his ship grounded on the rocks, and he vowed that he would renounce his claims on Vézelay and never again demand lodging and maintenance on the feasts of Easter and St. Mary Magdalen. By the help of God and of the saint, the ship slid off into calm water, and so he came to them to renew his vows in the presence of his wife and son and other witnesses.

During his absence Abbot Pons had watched over his interests and attempted to befriend

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 534; R. de Lespinasse, op. cit., pp. 309, 310.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 534, 535; *cf.* R. de Lespinasse, op. cit., p. 320.

his wife, the Countess Ida.[1] She was the daughter of Engelbert, Marquis of Istria and Duke of Carinthia, and her elder sister was the wife of Thibalt IV., Count of Champagne.[1] The Countess Ida was a woman of great ability, and all her life she was a stalwart defender of the claims and rights of her husband and sons, so the historian of Vézelay described her with violent prejudice as "that old Herodias, a daughter of Jezebel, of the seed of Amalech." The tolls on merchandise were a profitable source of revenue, so in her husband's absence she and her men continued to turn back merchants and pilgrims who were travelling on the King's high-road to Vézelay and force them to go through the lands of the Count. In April 1148 Eugenius III. and St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote from Reims and warned her to desist from this wicked conduct.

Hugh the Poitevin thought that the Count soon began to regret the feasting which he

[1] R. de Lespinasse, op. cit., pp. 313–316; "Spicilegium," III., pp. 492, 534, 594.

had often enjoyed at Vézelay. He was a violent and unscrupulous man, and as he was in need of money, he came under the influence of Hugh of St. Pierre.[1] Hugh had come to Vézelay as a stranger; he was then a poor craftsman of humble birth, but he was so skilled in mechanical arts that he had risen to be a wealthy manufacturer with mills and warehouses of his own. He made presents to the Count, and incited him to insist on his right of jurisdiction over Vézelay and its inhabitants. In the opinion of the historian, Hugh of St. Pierre wanted to rule the town himself, so he had secret meetings with some of the burgesses and they plotted treason under the guise of liberty. "When a man finds that his wealth avails him more than the natural abilities of other men, he holds himself above the children of kings," was the comment of Hugh the Poitevin.

In the early summer of 1150 a monk was riding through one of the Abbot's woods when he came upon a man cutting down a

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 535–541.

tree; he tried to seize the axe in proof of the offence, but the man attacked him and knocked him off his horse. The monk turned back and told his story to some of the Abbot's men; they came by night to the man's home and put out his eyes on the spot instead of bringing him before the Abbot's court for trial. It was a most cruel deed, and the Count of Nevers seized on the opportunity to renew the claim of jurisdiction. At the feast of St. Mary Magdalen the Count came to Vézelay, and lodged in the guest-house of the monastery, and commanded his men to shut the doors in the Abbot's face when he came to visit him. The Abbot put up with this insult, but he rode after the Count to Cluny and tried in vain to pacify him. The Count sent his men to ravage a property of the monastery, and insisted that the Abbot must come to his court of justice whenever he summoned him. The Abbot refused to yield, for he could not give up the privileges which his monastery had always enjoyed, and he sent messengers to ask for the Pope's help.

The Count was in a fury and ravaged other lands of Vézelay. At last peace was patched up by the friends of both parties, and the Abbot gave presents to the Count, who decided to go on the famous pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella.

As soon as he got back from Spain the Count summoned the Abbot to his high court of justice, and as Pons did not appear, the Count ordered a strict blockade of the territory of Vézelay. Armed men beset the roads leading to the town, merchants and pilgrims were turned back, and sometimes treated with violence. The money-changers and cloth merchants of Vézelay could not leave the town to go to the great fairs of Champagne.

The people began to curse the Abbot as the author of all their ills, who oppressed them by unjust laws and excited the fury of the Count against them to their ruin. They began to say among themselves that they would be happy and fortunate if they threw off the yoke of the Church and became subject to the Count instead. Hugh of

St. Pierre told the Count about the discontent and agitation in the town, and persuaded him that if he would come to Vézelay the majority of the burgesses and their leading men were ready to submit to his rule in exchange for his help and protection. The Count paid a sudden visit to Vézelay and had a secret meeting with a number of the burgesses, when he urged them to desert the Abbot, because his own might would avail them more than the prayers of the monks.

The Abbot knew about the secret meeting and sent some of the monks to prostrate themselves in the dust before the Count and beseech him to have mercy on the Church and not to seduce the burgesses from their allegiance. At last he agreed to grant a truce of eight days for the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, and the monks kept it with the usual splendour, though there were fewer strangers in the town.

After the festival was over the Abbot went with the Bishop of Auxerre to see the Count and to show him a mandate from

Eugenius III. "Henry, Bishop of Autun, has laid his complaints before us," wrote the Pope; ". . . we bid you come in person at the next octave of St. Martin, or send proctors with the muniments of your monastery, especially the founder's charter, and be ready to answer before us."[1] The Abbot reminded the Count that he had protected his lands and rights during his absence on pilgrimage, and he begged the Count in return to protect the monastery while he was away on this visit to Rome. He promised to persuade the Pope to allow him to appear before the Count's court, and he gave him a sum of money, so the Count agreed to keep the truce. The Abbot then started on his journey to be at Rome on Nov. 18, 1151.

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 485.

CHAPTER IV

ABBOT PONS AND THE BISHOPS OF AUTUN

THE dispute with the Bishops of Autun was of long standing. Vézelay was the greatest monastery in the diocese, and it was exempt from the jurisdiction of the Bishop. He was sometimes invited to celebrate high mass on great festivals, and was honoured with a procession and received hospitality by the favour of the Abbot, but he could claim nothing as a right at Vézelay.[1]

Bishop Norgald (1098–1112) was an unscrupulous man, and he quarrelled with his chapter and several other monasteries besides Vézelay. He put Vézelay under an interdict and thereby forbade any one to enter the church to pray and to make offerings at the shrine of St. Mary Magdalen. In

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 462.

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1103 Paschal II. sent a letter to the clergy, knights and other lay folk of France in which he removed the interdict and rebuked the presumption of the Bishop who had acted from jealousy.[1] In the bull of 1103, by which Paschal II. confirmed the privileges of Vézelay, he commanded that the Abbots of Vézelay should take counsel with the Abbots of Cluny instead of with the Popes before deciding any question about the benediction of an Abbot, the ordination of monks or clergy and the consecration of the monastery and other churches within the territory of Vézelay.[2] Their monks and clergy might be ordained by any catholic bishop and they might send to any catholic bishop for the chrism or holy oil which was consecrated on Maundy Thursday and used especially in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. Abbot Hugh of Cluny made a compromise with Bishop Norgald when both parties appeared before the papal legate Milo at Masille near Cluny in

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 469.

[2] Quantin, "Cartulaire de l'Yonne," II., p. 41.

1103. It was agreed that the monks of Vézelay should seek ordination from the Bishop of Autun, but that, if he declined, they could go to any catholic bishop. The Bishop could not refuse to give the chrism to the priests of the monastery, nor could he demand obedience from the Abbot. Norgald confirmed this agreement in the chapter-house of Cluny in the presence of Artald, Abbot of Vézelay.

In or about 1140 Elias, Bishop of Orleans, was at Vézelay, and Abbot Pons requested him to hold an ordination in the church of the monastery. The Bishop inspected the papal bulls and then ordained several monks and some priests.[2] Humbert de Beaujé, Bishop of Autun, showed his resentment by suspending the priests. He appeared before the general chapter of Cistercian Abbots at Cîteaux, probably in 1141, and humbled himself in prayer before them, complaining of his intolerable wrongs. Rainard, Abbot

[1] Bouquet, "Recueil des Historiens," XIV., p. 117.
[2] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 512, 513.

of Cîteaux, wrote to Pope Innocent II., alleging that it was no small scandal that so great a church as the ancient see of Autun should be deprived of its ancient right, for he said that Abbot Pons had withdrawn himself from subjection, not from any need or oppression but only from impatience.[1] Innocent II. restored the priests who had been suspended "against the tenor of the privileges of the apostolic see," and he forbade the Bishop to burden or harass the Abbot and monks of Vézelay.[2] About 1145 Bishop Humbert and Abbot Pons were reconciled through the mediation of Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, and six years afterwards Humbert testified at Rome that Pons then said to him, "Go to Vézelay and act as your predecessors were wont to do." Other witnesses were uncertain whether the Abbot of Vézelay or the Abbot of Cluny spoke these vague words.[3]

In 1148 Humbert became Archbishop of

[1] Bouquet, "Recueil," XV., pp. 400, 401.
[2] "Spicilegium," III., p. 472. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 514–519.

Lyons, and was succeeded at Autun by Henry of Burgundy, a brother of Duke Odo II. Henry listened eagerly to counsellors who told him that Autun had a prescriptive right of jurisdiction over Vézelay, and when he failed to enforce it by fair means, he oppressed the men of Vézelay and plundered their lands, and incited his brothers against them. Then he went to Rome to lay his case before Eugenius III., who summoned Pons to appear in person or by proxy on November 18, 1151.

The Abbot took with him the Priors of Alborne and Moret, several of the older monks and his cook. The witnesses for Bishop Henry of Burgundy were Humbert, Archbishop of Lyons, the Bishop of Nevers, the Abbot of Sainte Marguerite, the Prior of St. Symphorien, two old archpriests and other persons.

This early record of the depositions of witnesses before the papal court is of great interest. They swore on the gospels to tell the truth so far as they knew it, and Eugenius

III. commanded that their statements should be written on a triple schedule, of which two parts were to be given to the litigants and the third was to be kept for reference in the papal archives, if the controversy should ever be re-opened. Hugh the Poitevin found one part among the muniments of the monastery, and copied it into his history.[1]

The Abbot's witnesses gave evidence that, although the Bishops of Autun were sometimes invited to ordain monks and clerks of Vézelay and to consecrate altars in the church of the monastery and to give the chrism, the Abbots had also invited other bishops, including the Archbishop of Rouen and the Bishops of Auxerre, Nevers, Angers and Orleans. The Abbot instituted priests to churches within the territory of Vézelay and he heard matrimonial causes in his court. Two cases were cited. While Rainald was Abbot, a man named Stephen Aicaphit went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and as he stayed away for seven years his wife married another

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 509–520.

man. He came back and demanded his wife, but as she refused to return to him, he summoned her to appear in the Abbot's court, the Abbot gave her back to her first husband, and both she and the other man did penance for the sin of adultery. In the second case the wife went to Jerusalem, and in her absence the husband married another woman; when the first wife returned, the Abbot compelled him to take her back.

The chief witness on the other side was Humbert, Archbishop of Lyons. He swore that when he was Bishop of Autun he went to Vézelay without any invitation from the Abbot, and celebrated mass at Easter and preached to the people and gave the blessing as the Bishop of the diocese had a right to do. The secular clergy of the territory of Vézelay came regularly to his synods, and the archpriests gave the names of some who had been present and mentioned two who had been punished for their faults. However, another witness said that according to the custom of Vézelay none of the clergy of the

town might go to the Bishop's synod without the Abbot's leave, and he remembered an occasion on which the Abbot had forbidden them to go, and they obeyed him.

The weight of evidence was clearly in favour of the independence of Vézelay, but the Bishop of Autun urged the Pope to defer judgment on the plea that his most important witnesses were too old and infirm to travel to Rome, but he would gladly produce them in France. It is singular that no mention of the agreement of 1103 was made at this trial; it is possible that it lapsed at the death of Bishop Norgald or that his successors believed that it was damaging to their wider claim to jurisdiction over Vézelay. Eugenius III. granted the Bishop's request and appointed as judges delegate Godfrey, Bishop of Langres, Stephen, Abbot of Rigny, and Peter II., Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Tournus.[1] Eugenius III. was a Cistercian, and had been a monk of Clairvaux. The Bishop of Langres had been Prior of Clairvaux

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 520.

before 1138, and his election was a triumph for St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, over the Abbot of Cluny, the brother of the Abbot of Vézelay; possibly he bore a grudge, for he was always hostile to Vézelay. Rigny was a daughter house of Clairvaux and Abbot Stephen came from the mother house in 1128. The choice of the Pope had fallen on two men whom he knew very well, but the influence of Cistercians from Clairvaux was predominant.

Abbot Pons was anxious for a settlement, and when he returned home he urged the Bishop of Langres to appoint a day to hear the cause; the latter refused on the ground that the Abbot was the defendant, and it was the duty of the Bishop of Autun as plaintiff to ask the judges for a hearing.[1] The Bishop of Autun continued to harry the Abbot's men and to plunder his lands, and Eugenius III. received complaints from Pons that at the Bishop's instigation, his brother the Duke of Burgundy had forbidden his men to go

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 521.

to the shrine at Vézelay, so that the monastery not only lost their offerings, but the tolls and profits on the trade of the town, which suffered in consequence. The Duke also arrested and plundered the Abbot's men. The Bishop was charged with inflaming the Count of Nevers to persecute Pons and the monks. Eugenius III. reminded the Bishop that he had heard him say when at Rome that he would rather the monastery of Vézelay was utterly destroyed than not subject to him, and he wrote on June 20, 1152, to command him to appear before the Bishop of Langres, who would inquire into all these matters.[1] On January 27, 1153, Eugenius III. wrote to rebuke the Bishop of Autun for favouring the cause of the burgesses of Vézelay who had rebelled against Pons, and for admitting them to the services of the Church in his diocese, when he knew that they were under sentence of excommunication. He summoned him to come to Rome on the feast of St. Luke (October 18) to answer these charges and

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 487, 488.

to settle the controversy between him and Abbot Pons.[1]

On July 8, 1153, Eugenius III. died and was succeeded by Anastasius IV. on July 12. Pons wrote urging him to give judgment in the cause between him and the Bishop of Autun, and the Pope summoned both parties to appear before him a fortnight after Easter, 1154, unless they made peace with one another before then.[2] The Bishop knew that although he had been able to delay the judgment for two years and a half, it would be given against him, so he asked his brother, the Duke of Burgundy, to sue for peace. The Duke sent the Abbot of Cîteaux and other Cistercians to Pons, who welcomed them and granted their request. He gave the Bishop the kiss of peace, and the Bishop set his seal to his bond in the presence of many witnesses. The words were, "Be it known to all present and future that I, Henry, in the name of God, Bishop of Autun, by the advice of religious persons and of some of the brethren of our

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 486, 487. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 522.

church, have desired to end the long-standing controversy between Vézelay and Autun by a friendly agreement, so that Pons and I may persist and continue in peace and concord, saving the right, during my life, and the privileges of either church." [1]

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 522, 523.

CHAPTER V

ABBOT PONS AND THE COMMUNE OF VÉZELAY

WHEN Abbot Pons was at Rome in the winter of 1151–1152, he consulted Eugenius III. about the claim of the Count of Nevers to jurisdiction over Vézelay. He had promised the Count that he would persuade the Pope to allow him to appear before the Count's court, because he wanted to negotiate a truce during his absence. Eugenius III. forbade him to yield a jot of the right of St. Peter or to betray the liberty of the Church by any act of cowardice, since the monastery had been put under papal protection by the founder.[1]

The Abbot left Rome about the end of

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 541.

January, 1152, and on his return he told the Count of the Pope's prohibition, and assured him that he had kept his promise. Probably the Count suspected that Pons had seized the opportunity to get the Pope's support. He was furious, and again blockaded Vézelay, and incited some of his vassals to make war on the monks by raiding their lands and carrying off their cattle.[1] There were terrible scenes of violence, monks and priests were illtreated and killed, travellers were robbed, pilgrims were carried away into captivity, and noble women suffered outrage. Pons went to King Louis VII. to ask for help against the Count, who appeared and put forward a claim to the advowry or protection of the monastery, saying that his ancestors had possessed it without let or hindrance. Pons opposed it and explained that the founder had put Vézelay under the protection of the papacy, and that the monastery was safeguarded by the charter of Louis VI., which he had with him. The King read it and asked

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 542–544.

Pons if he would submit the case to him and accept his judgment. Pons saw that the court favoured his enemy, and was afraid that he would wrong his monastery, which was subject solely to the judgment of the Pope. He besought the King to command the Count to desist from persecuting the monastery, and submit to the judgment of the papal legate who had been appointed by the Pope to inquire into the cause of the controversy. The Count refused with a mocking laugh, so the Abbot bade the King farewell and returned home. Cardinal John Paparo was on his way back from a special mission to England, and in answer to an urgent message from Pons, he hastened his journey and summoned the Count and the Abbot to meet him at Auxerre. The legate exhorted the Count to give up his claim and make peace with Pons, but only succeeded in getting a truce of eight days for the coming festival of St. Mary Magdalen. Then he rode on with Pons to Vézelay where they were joined by Cardinal Jordan, the papal legate

for France, who had been invited by Cardinal John to keep the festival with him.

Cardinal Jordan was a Roman by birth and was promoted to the college of Cardinals by Eugenius III. in 1145, and was now acting as papal legate in France.

The Count followed them and harangued a great meeting of the burgesses on the hill outside the town where St. Bernard had preached the crusade six years before.[1] ". . . You appear to possess much," he said, "but in reality you are masters of nothing; nay, even more, you do not enjoy your material liberty. When I look around at these fair lands, these splendid vineyards, large rivers, rich pastures, fertile fields, dense woods, fruit-trees and the fine houses which are yours without any possibility of enjoying them, I feel the most tender compassion for you." He reminded them that they had killed Abbot Artald, a man who was both wise and generous, and taunted them with their submission to Pons, a cruel and insolent

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 544–548.

stranger from Auvergne who took toll of their goods and punished them in their persons. "So long as you keep faith with my enemy," he concluded, "there will be no salvation for you; but if you will swear a mutual alliance and keep faith with me, you shall enjoy my protection everywhere, and I will strive to free you from all exactions and bad customs, and I will defend you from the attack of evildoers."

The burgesses, who had come to hear the Count, replied, "We have sworn fealty to our Lord, and although he treats us disgracefully, we judge that it is wicked to betray our trust, so we will take counsel before we come to a decision, and we will meet you again shortly and give you our answer." Then they came and told the Abbot of the Count's speech. Pons warned them that the Count only designed to use them to gain his own ends; he urged them to remain loyal to him and the Church, and to act with him in defence of their liberty and safety in the sure hope that better days would come. But

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the burgesses were afraid of the Count's might, and urged Pons to yield to his enemy for the sake of peace; however, they promised that in any case they would be faithful to him. He refused to set his hand to such a deed of shame as a surrender to the Count, and promised to defend their persons and their liberty and to suffer good and evil fortune with them. Then he sent them away.

Certain persons who had hitherto plotted in secret, now met openly and attracted many of the young men and formed a federation against the Abbot; they went to meet the Count and entered into an alliance with him and agreed to set up a Commune. The Count swore that he would never fail them, and he appointed officers and magistrates who were called consuls as in the free towns of the south of France. Some of the older men went to visit the two Cardinal legates who were staying in the monastery and to ask for the remission of certain of the Abbot's dues which they called a tyrannical innovation. The Cardinals promised to intercede with the

Abbot if the burgesses would withdraw from their alliance with his enemy and give their support to him, as he was now in danger of death for their common liberty and safety. Pons was willing to remit the dues and pardon the burgesses on the same conditions, but he would yield nothing to force. The burgesses withdrew in anger, threatening to rebel against the Church.

A few days later, after a vain attempt to negotiate with the Count, the two Cardinals left Vézelay with the Abbot riding between them, for they knew that men had sworn to have his life. They went to Chablis and summoned the Count to plead his cause. They judged it unreasonable that the Abbot should be compelled to appear before the Count's court, and they read letters from Eugenius III. threatening him with excommunication if he refused to do the Abbot right. So great was the Count's rage that for some time he would not give the Cardinals a safe conduct through his lands, and he refused one to the Abbot unless he returned to Vézelay. The

Bishop of Nevers took the Abbot from the church of the Benedictine monks of Chablis, and rode with him out of the town, and thence Pons fled many miles to the south-west until he was safe in the Bourbonnais. He took refuge at Le Montet-aux-Moines,[1] a priory dependent on the monastery of St. Michel de Cluse in Piedmont, which had been founded by his grandfather.

Thither a messenger came to tell him of wild deeds at Vézelay.[2] The townsmen had dug trenches and thrown up a rampart round the monastery, garrisoned the towers of the church, shut up the monks in their buildings, broken down the outer walls, and destroyed houses, mills, and stores. Pons rode eastwards to Cluny to find the Cardinals, and he persuaded them to excommunicate the men of Vézelay who were guilty of sacrilege and treachery. He came back to Le Montet with the excommunication in writing and sent a messenger with it to Vézelay. The priests

[1] "Les Archives de la France Monastique," ed. Beaunier et Besse, Vol. V., p. 57.

[2] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 549–552.

summoned the people to hear the sentence of the Cardinals, certain persons were excommunicated by name, the town was put under an interdict, and the people were deprived of all the sacraments except the baptism of infants and confession of the dying. A rush was made at the priest who read the sentence, one man took up stones to throw at him, two men pulled off their wooden shoes intending to hit him, and if others had not stopped them, he would have been torn into a thousand pieces. He took refuge at the altar and escaped with difficulty. The next day the priest removed the folding doors of the church and blocked the entrance with thorns as a sign of the interdict, but Hugh and Peter of St. Pierre pulled away the thorns and put back the doors. In the church of St. Stephen they overpowered the priest who tried to resist them, and they took away the chalice, vestments, and church books. Then they went to the monastery and abused Prior Hilduin and some of the monks, complaining of the excommunication and

demanding a truce; when the Prior refused it, they said, "As you excommunicate us when we have not deserved it, we will act as excommunicated men, we will not pay tithes, taxes, or rent." They complained to the Count about the excommunication, and he told them that he could do nothing. "Where are we to grind our corn and bake our bread?" they asked him. He answered, "Go and heat the public oven with your own wood and bake your bread, and if any one opposes you burn him alive, and if the miller hinders you crush him alive under his own millstone." So the people of Vézelay paid no heed to the excommunication and the interdict. When one man died who was under the sentence of excommunication, the people rang the bells and buried him without a priest, and they turned the priest out of his house. They abused and struck the monks and went into the church of the monastery as they chose. The Count scorned the Prior's remonstrances and exclaimed, "Would to God that all the monks had gone away, and that their

monastery was utterly destroyed! Why did the Abbot get this sentence of excommunication? If the whole hill of Vézelay were hurled into the abyss, I would not give a hair off my cloak to stop it."

While Pons was at Cluny, he begged the Cardinals to ask his brother, Abbot Peter the Venerable, to give him the priory of Souvigny in the Bourbonnais, some distance north-east of Le Montet-aux-Moines. Abbot Peter promised that he would soon find a refuge for his brother. Not content with this pledge Abbot Pons wrote to Eugenius III. to ask him for Souvigny, and Abbot Peter was much displeased when he received a severe letter from the Pope commanding him to give Souvigny to his brother for the time of his exile.[1] He was half-hearted about Pons, for he was very much afraid that the Pope would excommunicate the Count and put the Nivernais under an interdict, and several Cluniac monasteries would suffer in consequence. He urged the Count to make

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 490.

peace with Pons and to allow him to mediate between them.[1] The Count accepted his offer and sent the aged Prior of the Cluniac monastery of St. Étienne at Nevers to Pons; the Prior praised the Abbot for his constancy and magnanimity, and suggested that if only he would be less obstinate it would not do the least harm to his monastery. Pons believed that his excellent cause must be safe in his brother's hands and he agreed to let him make peace.

The Count and Pons came to a conference at Luzy, near Autun. Peter the Venerable took counsel with the Abbots of Moissac and St. Michel de Cluse and other important monks of Cluny, and they proposed a compromise. This was so satisfactory to the Count that he was willing to dissolve the commune and put Pons in possession of his monastery with full enjoyment of his feudal rights over the town. Pons disliked the compromise, for he thought that the foundation of the agreement was unsafe because it was

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 552–554.

dangerous to the liberty of Vézelay. About the end of 1152 or early in 1153 the conference adjourned to Nevers, where the Count was joined by some of the burgesses of Vézelay and Abbot Pons by the Prior and some of the monks. The monks of Vézelay suspected that something was being arranged which would humiliate their monastery, because the monks of Cluny excluded them from a discussion about the agreement. They went to remonstrate with Abbot Peter the Venerable, who was very angry with Abbot Pons, and told him that all his efforts to help him were useless if Pons worked against him in secret. Pons protested that he was quite innocent.[1] He was willing to make peace with the Count, and they adjourned to the Cluniac monastery of La Charité on the Loire, twenty-four miles from Nevers, to draw up the settlement, which was then drafted by Thibalt, one of the Count's clerks. The leaders of the burgesses were willing to abjure the

[1] Here the gap occurs in the MS., and the reference is to the "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," Vol. XVI., pp. 345–365.

Commune and pay an indemnity, but could not pledge the rest of the burgesses without consulting them. Every one set out for Vézelay, and on the road there was a further dispute about the clauses which gave the Count rights in Vézelay. Abbot Peter the Venerable abandoned his task of mediating between his brother and the Count, and rode home to Cluny. Meanwhile Pons was expecting an answer from Rome to letters which he had written before the conference at Luzy, urging the Pope to excommunicate both the Count and the burgesses. As they had not arrived, he signed the agreement. The burgesses came out to meet the Count, who persuaded them to submit to Pons and give pledges for the payment of a considerable sum of money for damages.

There was peace for a short time. However, when the Abbot's servants tried to prevent certain persons from trespassing in the woods and damaging them, they offered violent resistance. The burgesses pulled down the house in which the agreement was kept and

set up the Commune again. Pons appealed to the Count for help. He offered at first to come to Vézelay to judge between the Abbot and the burgesses, but when Pons refused this suggestion, he was persuaded to summon the leaders to appear before him. According to the historian of Vézelay the conspirators numbered three thousand, but this statement is an obvious exaggeration. Unfortunately Pons again damaged his cause by an act of violence and injustice, for he arrested the burgesses when they were on their way to the Count's court and got new pledges of submission from them by force.

The people of Vézelay were goaded to fury. When Pons attempted to ride out of the monastery he was driven back by men armed with swords who tried to batter in the gates. The Bishop of Nevers was at Vézelay, perhaps to keep the Easter festival in this year, 1153, and he calmed the people. The Count arrived and complained that sometimes the Abbot invoked his protection and sometimes repulsed him. He had heard news

of the coming sentence of excommunication, for the letters of Eugenius III., dated December 19, 1152, were delivered about Easter. He refused to help Pons against the burgesses, and promised them his help and protection.

Eugenius III. espoused the Abbot's cause very hotly. If the Count did not make restitution to the monastery for all the wrongs which he had done and leave it in peace and liberty within thirty days after the summons, the Pope commanded the Bishop of Langres to excommunicate the Count and the traitor burgesses of Vézelay, and put all the Count's lands under an interdict and send the papal letters to the bishops of the neighbouring dioceses to see that the sentence was observed everywhere.[1]

The Pope had heard from Pons that the archpriest of Avallon and two priests had given communion to burgesses of Vézelay, knowing that they were excommunicated. If this had really happened the Bishop of Langres must suspend them from their offices,

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 480, 481.

and send them to the Pope to answer for their presumption.[1] He rebuked the Bishop of Autun, who had allowed and even ordered the priests of his diocese to celebrate the sacraments for the burgesses whom he had incited against Pons.[2] If any burgess of Vézelay should come to any place in the diocese no priest might celebrate the sacraments in his presence.

In letters to the Archbishop of Sens and the Bishops of Langres, Paris and Troyes, Eugenius III. bade them prohibit the presence of any of the perjured traitor and excommunicated burgesses of Vézelay at any fairs or markets in their dioceses and command their people to seize the burgesses and spoil their goods.[3] He wrote in the same strain to the Duke of Burgundy, the Count of Champagne and their vassals.[4] Thus the burgesses were touched in their persons and their pockets as well as outcast from the Church.

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 489, 490. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 486, 487.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 481. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 481, 482.

Eugenius III. wrote to the Bishop of Langres, not only because he had known him when they were both monks at Clairvaux, but because the Bishop was such a near neighbour of Abbot Pons that he heard of all that happened at Vézelay.[1] The choice was unfortunate for Pons. Bishop Godfrey was always hostile to Vézelay, and he had no wish to offend the Count of Nevers. He was at Vézelay at Whitsuntide, but he put off sending the summons to the Count and taking proceedings as the Pope had commanded.

On July 8, Eugenius III. died. He was succeeded on July 12 by Conrad, Bishop of Sabina, a Roman by birth, who took the name of Anastasius IV.

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 480.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIUMPH OF ABBOT PONS

IN the autumn of 1153 King Louis VII. arrived at Vézelay on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Mary Magdalen when Pons was at the priory of Souvigny, where he had gone to pray at the tomb of St. Majolus, one of the great Abbots of Cluny. The burgesses of Vézelay made insinuations against their Abbot, and the King sent the Count of Nevers to summon Pons to appear before him. The Abbot was afraid that the King was now prejudiced against him, so he tried to come to terms with the Count, who refused to parley with him, saying, "Every discussion with you is endless and peace is as fragile as a spider's web." He rode back in haste to the King and reported that the Abbot had not followed him. The King was very angry

and ordered the Abbot to pay all the expenses of lodging for himself and his train at Vézelay on the ground that he had the right of procuration in all monasteries. Pons consulted the monks in chapter and offered to pay the expenses of a voluntary procuration without recognizing the King's new claim to demand it as a right. Some months later the King's mother Alix of Savoy and her sister, the wife of Archambault de Bourbon, an enemy of the Count of Nevers, came on a pilgrimage to Vézelay.[1] Afterwards Archambault and his wife interceded with the King for Pons, and early in 1154 Louis VII. wrote to him, "Whatever cause of offence we have against you we pardon it altogether, and we banish the cloud of all our rancour and for the rest we kindly receive you into our favour, and all that belongs to you we take under our royal protection."[2]

Soon after his reconciliation with the King, Pons received a letter from Anastasius IV.

[1] "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," XVI., pp. 366–384.

[2] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 500, 501.

dated Christmas Day, 1153.[1] The Pope had heard from him that the Bishop of Langres had failed to execute the mandates of Eugenius III. At the Abbot's request the Pope had written letters to archbishops and bishops of France, the King, counts and barons, as he would see from the copies enclosed. "If therefore, my beloved son in Christ, you suffer tribulations for the house of Israel," he wrote, "you ought to hope that God will give you help from tribulation and will bring you by His grace to a haven of peace. Show yourself to be a most strong wall of protection for your Church as you have been in the past." In conclusion he forbade Pons to yield anything to the Count of Nevers without his mandate.

Among the papal letters was a mandate to the Archbishop of Bourges to summon the Count of Nevers forthwith to make restitution to the monastery of Vézelay and to warn him not to summon the Abbot before his court unless the Abbot had denied justice in his

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 499, 500.

own court.[1] If the Count did not obey the summons within thirty days, the Pope commanded the Archbishop to excommunicate the Count and the traitor burgesses of Vézelay and put all the Count's lands under an interdict. He wrote in the same strain as Eugenius III. to certain bishops and barons of France,[2] and asked the King to ban the burgesses of Vézelay from all the fairs of his kingdom, and have nothing to do with the Count if he came under the sentence of excommunication.[3] The Count should have justice if he first obeyed the papal mandate.

The Pope's intervention brought about the settlement of the long quarrel between Pons and Henry of Burgundy, Bishop of Autun. He was summoned to appear at Rome a fortnight after Easter, 1154, so he made peace before then.[4]

Louis VII. offered to come to Auxerre and hear the cause between the Abbot, the Count of Nevers and the burgesses of Vézelay.

[1] "Spicilegium," pp. 496, 497. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 495, 496.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 497, 498. [4] *Cf.* Chapter IV., pp. 90, 91.

Pons was very anxious to get his support, but he hesitated to recognize the King's right to give judgment in the case, as he feared that the claims of the crown might be even more prejudicial to the independence of the monastery than those of the Count. He was able to decline the King's offer on the ground that the Pope had commanded the Archbishop of Bourges to act without delay. But he was doomed to fresh disappointment. The Archbishop did not wish to make an enemy of so near and powerful a neighbour as the Count of Nevers, so he said that he had not enough information about the wrongs of the contending parties and took no further action.

There was despair in the monastery. Pons commanded the monks to bar the doors of the church, strip the altars of their ornaments and toll the bells. Very few of the people cared. The Count again beset the roads and turned back merchants and pilgrims, while the leaders of the burgesses assumed a still more threatening attitude. Nothing was left to Pons but to invoke the King's help. Louis

VII. was ready to intervene, and he summoned the Count and the burgesses to appear before him at Auxerre in December, 1154.

Pons then formally accepted the King as sovereign arbiter and recognised his jurisdiction, but the representatives of the Commune hesitated on the ground that they had no mandate from their fellow-burgesses, and must go back to Vézelay to take counsel with them. In this answer the King saw a sure proof of their guilt. "I swear by Bethlehem, by the cradle of our Lord, by the crown I wear," he exclaimed, "that the just cries of the Church have not resounded in vain. I shall know how to mete out rigorous treatment to insurgents and contumacious persons such as you, and you will undergo the chastisement which your crimes have deserved. Meanwhile depart. I will no longer endure your presence." The King's anger increased as he listened to the Abbot's tale of outrage, and he promised to visit Vézelay. Pons sent a message to Prior Hilduin bidding him put all the ornaments back on the altars, and decorate the church

as for a festival, and come out in procession with the monks, priests, servants, and any of the people who were still faithful to him, to meet the King and his train. The Count of Nevers rode off in haste, and advised the burgesses to make a formal act of submission to the King. Louis VII. sent for them as soon as he arrived, and commanded them to obey the Abbot as their lawful lord.

The result of the King's visit was a truce with the Count. The Abbot of Cluny was anxious to bring about a lasting peace, and two other brothers of Pons, Jordan, Abbot of Chaise-Dieu and Heraclius, Archbishop of Lyons, and his friend, Macarius, Abbot of Fleury, also persuaded him to make terms with his enemy, and both parties sealed a settlement early in 1155. Anastasius IV. died on December 3, 1154, and was succeeded two days later by the Cardinal Bishop of Albano, Adrian IV., the only Englishman who has ever been Pope. When he heard of this settlement he declared that it was contrary to the privileges of his predecessors, and he

commanded the Count to give it back to the Abbot.[1]

Pons had consented to recognize that Vézelay was under the protection of the Count, who soon found an opportunity of exercising his right. A neighbouring baron persistently raided the lands of the monastery, so the Count sent armed men into the town where they lived by plunder and stirred up the burgesses against the Abbot. As the Count paid no heed to remonstrances, Pons sent messengers to Adrian IV. to ask for help in this fresh trouble.

Meanwhile there was a dispute about the possession of some land between the Abbot and one of his men, and he decided on a trial by battle. Crowds gathered in the cemetery of the town to witnesss the duel between the Abbot's champion and Robert Dufour. Hugh of St. Pierre incited the mob to attack the monks, and threw the first stone himself. The Abbot, the Prior, and some of the monks escaped to their fortress, which stood apart

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 501.

from the monastery, but the people broke into the monastic buildings, forced open the wine casks, poured away the wine, destroyed everything on which they could lay hands, and assaulted the monks and their servants.

A few of the faithful inhabitants of the town and the neighbouring villages joined the Abbot in the fortress. His messenger escaped the armed men of St. Père who were guarding the roads and carried the Abbot's urgent appeal for help to the Count of Nevers. The Count would do nothing, but the Bishop of Nevers hastened to Vézelay, got into the fortress and cheered the garrison. Then he went out and harangued the burgesses and persuaded them to agree to a seven days' truce.

Pons eluded the sentinels and went to the King, who was then at Corbeil; and he cited the contending parties to appear at the Council of Soissons which met in June, 1155. Pons carried the King's message to the Count of Nevers, and then went to visit his brother,

Heraclius, Archbishop of Lyons; his enemies lay in ambush for him and he narrowly escaped being murdered on the way.

At the Council of Soissons the King decreed a general peace for ten years to be extended to all Churches, cultivators of the soil, and merchants, but it was an ineffectual measure.[1] The Abbot of Vézelay was represented by his proctors. His brother, the Abbot of Cluny, made a strong appeal on behalf of the monastery of Vézelay, but there were very divergent views among the bishops and barons. The King favoured a further delay and charged the Archbishop of Sens to make a fresh and full examination of the case, and then to deliver judgment.

While Pons waited at Lyons for the return of the messenger whom he had sent to Adrian IV., he heard of a fresh outbreak of violence at Vézelay. The burgesses held that the Abbot's flight was a breach of the truce, so they raided the crops and cattle of the monastery. The valiant Prior Hilduin and

[1] Lavisse, "Histoire de France," III., part I., p. 34.

the monks prepared for a siege in their fortress, and they were joined by some of the Abbot's peasants, archers, fishermen and carters, who climbed up the ramparts by ropes in the darkness. The garrison was very small, a hundred against five thousand, according to Hugh the Poitevin, but, like other mediæval writers, he was probably inaccurate in his reckoning of large numbers. The burgesses failed to take the fortress by assault, but the garrison had no sufficient store of food for a long siege, the bread ration was used up and they had nothing left but some meat. The first messenger who was sent to tell the Abbot of their plight was caught by the burgesses, who executed him and nailed his head to a tree facing the fortress.

At last the Abbot's messenger arrived at Lyons with several letters from the Pope, dated May 21, 1155.[1] Adrian IV. had the strongest sympathy with Pons, for he had himself entered into a struggle with the Commune of Rome which had been set up

[1] "Spicilegium," III., pp. 501–504.

in 1143, and he was expecting Frederick Barbarossa to come from Germany to be crowned as Emperor at Rome and to help him against the citizens. After the murder of a cardinal he had put Rome under an interdict, a penalty which no other pope had ventured to inflict on the city. The people rose in revolt against the Senate and forced them to sue for mercy; the Pope removed the interdict on condition that they banished their great leader, Arnold of Brescia.

In answer to the appeal of Abbot Pons, Adrian IV. commanded King Louis VII. to go to Vézelay and compel the burgesses to abjure the Commune, to return to their subjection to their lawful lord and make restitution for all the damage which they had done. He urged the King to inflict such exemplary punishment on the leaders that succeeding generations should never raise their heads against their lawful lord. In a letter to the bishops of France he grieved that not one of them had taken the shield of justice and arisen to help the church of

Vézelay. They must cease to be lukewarm and hasten to admonish the burgesses to make restitution and return to their allegiance. If, however, the burgesses paid no heed to their mandates, the Abbot would send a list of the names of the leaders, and the bishops must excommunicate these men at once. He repeated the instructions of his predecessors to enforce the interdict and the excommunication, and prevent the burgesses from trading anywhere. He gave to the Bishops of Autun, Langres, Nevers and Auxerre the hard task of compelling the Count of Nevers to obey the Pope's command; if he proved contumacious, they must renew the sentence of excommunication against him and see that the interdict on his lands was observed.

Louis VII. was very unlike his father Louis VI., for he had none of the qualities of a soldier; he was weak and irresolute and lacking in initiative. However, he had more sympathy with the people and was not openly hostile to the communes, and determined as a matter of principle to support his bishops

and abbots against them as his father had done.[1]

He summoned the Count of Nevers to come to Sens with representatives of the burgesses of Vézelay, but as he appeared without them, the hearing was adjourned. Neither the Count nor the burgesses appeared at Chaumont, so the King began to prepare for a punitive expedition. The Count garrisoned his strongholds, but at the same time he urged the Bishops of Auxerre and Langres to intercede for him. The Bishop of Langres refused, but another Bishop was willing to act with the Bishop of Auxerre. At their request the King abandoned the expedition, and summoned all parties to appear before him at Montargis. There Abbot Pons told the story of the trial by battle and the attack on the monastery in which the sanctuary was defiled and some of the monks and servants were killed.[2]

[1] Luchaire, "Les Communes Françaises," pp. 276–279.

[2] "Spicilegium," III., p. 555. Here the gap in the text ends, and the rest of the story is told from pp. 555–564. *Cf.* also Bouquet, "Recueil," XV., p. 132, and "Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques de l'Yonne," XVI., pp. 388–431.

The people wanted his life and would have hacked him into a thousand pieces. "I come to you for justice," he concluded; "I ask from these men the price of my blood and the blood of my people, of my death which they sought to compass. I ask for damages for the losses of my monastery, saving your rights and those of the people, for I cannot and may not overlook these wrongs."

The Count of Nevers urged that many of the common people were strangers in Vézelay, and it would be unjust to make the inhabitants responsible for the misdeeds of the mob. The Abbot should give the names of the guilty, so that the innocent might go free. The answer to this specious plea was that it was the duty of the citizens to defend their lord and even to die for him. All who had not left Vézelay with the Abbot nor helped the monks to defend themselves were guilty of treachery, faithlessness, sacrilege, perjury, and homicide.

The King gave sentence that the Abbot should produce legal proofs of the losses of

his monastery and should receive restitution in full. The Abbot objected to the necessity for legal proofs, since these men had been excommunicated by three Popes in succession. The Bishop of Langres, who as usual was hostile to Pons, acted with the Archdeacon of Nevers for the burgesses, and urged that there was no list of men who had been publicly excommunicated. Pons had the names, and announced that the Archbishop of Sens and Bishops of Paris and Troyes had publicly excommunicated these men. He was persuaded to get legal proofs of the losses from the officers and servants of the monastery, and the Court adjourned to meet in the forest near Moret a few days later.

The Abbot then made a claim for actual losses for 160,000 shillings, without reckoning depredations in his woods and waters. The burgesses were filled with consternation and fled to Vézelay. When the King heard that they had left his court without permission he said, "The Abbot has proved the justice of his cause, and these traitors have proved their

treachery : because they have fled from justice let sentence be given according to their guilt."

The Archbishop of Reims gave judgment that the Count of Nevers should arrest these men and bring them before the King for punishment and hand over all their property to the Abbot to indemnify him for his losses. The Bishop of Langres tried to refute the Archbishop's judgment, but gave way when the Archbishop told him that the only remedy was an appeal to the Pope. The King commanded the Count to carry out the sentence before the Sunday of the following week.

The Count remembered his oath to protect the burgesses, so he sent his heralds to Vézelay to proclaim that all the inhabitants of the town and the surrounding country should carry away all their movable goods and seek a secure hiding-place before he arrived in the town to carry out the sentence. All the enemies of the monastery fled, and the next morning not a man was to be seen. On the

evening of the appointed Sunday, Abbot Pons rode from Givry to Vézelay and was welcomed with great rejoicing by the monks. The Count feigned illness but sent his servants to the town. They visited the Abbot and told him that they found no one but women and children. He replied, "Then four of you came to arrest several thousand men," and one of his men added, "If you have come to seize these traitors, you will find eighty of them hidden in the forest near here, and they rob all who pass by." The Count's servants answered that their road lay in another direction.

Some of the monks went out armed into the town with some youths and broke the table of Simon the money-changer and hacked down the porch which he had built out in front of his house. They also destroyed the private wine-presses which Hugh Mangepain and Hugh of St. Pierre had presumed to set up in the cellars of their houses.

The Count of Nevers ordered his officials to show every kindness to the burgesses who

had taken refuge in his lands, but to prevent them from coming to see him. Some of the fugitives wandered about the countryside where they were liable to be robbed and imprisoned. The vagrants and the poor built shelters in the forest near Vézelay and lived by robbing travellers and pilgrims ; numbers of them assembled at Corbigny, a few miles to the south, and planned to take the town by a sudden assault.

The Abbot hired a strong company of archers and cross-bowmen, who captured the entrenched positions which these fugitives had prepared for their attack on the town, and then scoured the country in pursuit of them. The men who were caught were imprisoned and some suffered the loss of a limb. Pons now avenged himself on his worst enemy, the wealthy Hugh of St. Pierre ; all his substance was destroyed and his goods were confiscated, his houses and mills were demolished and the banks of his ponds were broken down. Pons also punished eight other burgesses who had spread sedition by pulling

down their houses to the foundations and setting fire to them and spoiling their goods. He showed mercy on others and only confiscated their wine. Shields and weapons of all kinds were found in the houses of the burgesses, and many men were thrown into prison to await the King's sentence.

The Count of Nevers advised the burgesses who had taken refuge on his lands not to surrender. He set out for Paris with a pilgrim's scrip and staff to visit the monastery of St. Denis on the feast of the saint (October 9), and on his way he saw the King and begged him to spare the exiles from Vézelay, pleading that the monastery would be left desolate if the town were destroyed. He promised that he would bring the men before the King for judgment, and that they would satisfy the Abbot and the Church and conclude a treaty of perpetual peace.

The King listened to him and sent a letter to Pons asking him to spare the houses of the burgesses until after November 3, when the Count would bring the exiles to Auxerre

for judgment. The Count then again tried to best the Abbot by asking the King to alter the time and place, but Pons was too strong for him. On November 4 the King gave sentence that the burgesses should utterly abjure their conspiracy and confederation; arrest, if possible, those who had killed the servants of the Church and, if not, betray their names, swear on the gospels to be faithful to the Abbot and to protect him, the monks and all their men in life and limb, pay the sum of 40,000 shillings in damages, and destroy the fortifications and ramparts around their houses before November 30.

The Commune of Vézelay was suppressed three years after it was set up. The burgesses were very wealthy, and they entered into the struggle with as fair prospects of success as the burgesses of other Communes. However they were wanting in independence and they trusted too much in the Count of Nevers, who encouraged their movement solely for his own ends. The Abbot was a most formidable antagonist, and as they failed to

kill him, he succeeded in bringing the supreme power in Church and State into an alliance against them.

About forty of the burgesses took the oath at Auxerre and returned to Vézelay with Pons; other fugitives came in to surrender in bands. The Abbot appointed some of the burgesses to collect the indemnity; all were bound to make a sworn statement of the value of their property, and they were assessed at the rate of two shillings in the pound.

The burgesses were very reluctant to level the ramparts round their houses. Simon the money-changer trusted to his powerful friends, the neighbouring lords, and went on building the fortifications of his house. The Abbot summoned a host of his peasants, and on Saturday after the feast of the Epiphany, 1156, he sent them with some of the monks to Simon's house. They pulled down the outer walls, the ramparts and the tower to the foundations while Simon sat within by the fire with his wife and children. This deed was

a warning to the other burgesses, and they hastened to give pledges to the Abbot that they would destroy the fortifications of their houses.

So Pons triumphed over all his enemies, and for the remaining years of his life there was peace at Vézelay. He had won victory for his monastery through his indomitable courage and determination, but he left a heritage of trouble to his successors. He died in October, 1161, a few weeks before his enemy, Count William III. of Nevers, and he was buried before the tomb of St. Mary Magdalen.[1]

[1] "Spicilegium," III., p. 568.

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